





## Sketch

## 'Peace of Kofi' blesses MPs



John Ezard

WHEN one of Tony Blair's predecessors announced the lethally short-lived Munich agreement 50 years ago, a pre-war Guardian parliamentary sketch writer caught the mood in a sweetly sardonic sentence. "Members of the House of Commons got as near today to a sense of the peace of God that passes all understanding as human beings are ever likely to do," Francis Boyd wrote.

It was a hit like that in the Commons yesterday when Mr Blair made his statement on peace with Iraq. In 1948 the intensity of relief was because everyone was terrified of being bombed by Hitler with relative impunity. Yesterday it was because almost everyone was horrified at the prospect of bombing another country with total military impunity.

The need not to do that might feel temporary, and the small print still passes understanding for many. But it was still tremendously welcome. This may be seen as a kind of moral advance. Tony Benn voiced the idea gracefully when he said the chief joy in Kofi Annan's agreement was that "tens of thousands of civilians will now be spared from a death which could not in any way have been caused by their behaviour".

But his next sentences ran into savage murmurs from his own benches. Mr Benn credited Mr Annan for "rescuing the United Nations from the attempt by the United States to dominate it". Then he asked: "Will you accept that there were many people, including myself, who were very disappointed that a Labour government would have been prepared to go in and use force against the majority view, not only of the Security Council, but of world opinion?"

Tony Blair gave not the slightest quarter: "My right

honourable friend is entitled to his views. My right honourable friend enjoys a freedom here he would not enjoy in Iraq."

The UN secretary-general would reject Mr Benn's version of events. Only when Saddam Hussein knew we were serious about force did he begin to make concessions. That was the firm, on-message theme of the afternoon.

Based overwhelmingly on relief, it was endorsed by virtually all Mr Benn's colleagues. Gerald Kaufman, a former shadow foreign secretary, got reverberating "hear hears" by denouncing "ap- peasement in this House and in the soft-centre press" who, he said, would have made Mr Annan's agreement impossible. "Will you confirm that this is it?" he asked Mr Blair.

"That if this agreement is broken by Saddam Hussein then force will inevitably follow?" His leader avoided saying Yes, making do with a repetition of what he had told Mr Benn about Saddam.

Mr Blair's 10-minute announcement was brief, confident and unambitious. Only the deepened crows' feet around his eyes betrayed that he and others had been through a period of strain. All the heavily emphasised buzz-phrases in his speech won the reactions he was aiming for from most MPs of all parties.

"The UN Security Council cannot accept that any areas remain off limits" (hear hear). "We are not going to play more elaborate diplomatic games" (ditto). "Inspections wherever and whenever they wish to inspect" (ditto).

William Hague and Paddy Ashdown were consummately supportive. Mr Ashdown with the session's first dash of rhetoric about the "literally incalculable debt" owed to Kofi Annan.

Then, after half an hour of unanimity which might have seemed excessive even in an Iraqi parliament, if such a place existed, a small figure in a white suit rose and left the chamber without feeling that he needed to speak.

It was the signal everyone had been waiting for. In every trouble spot all over the world, everyone has known for 20 years that when Martin Bell decides to go home, peace has definitely broken out. For a time, anyway.

Weapons inspection chief plans early visit to Baghdad □ Security Council gives pact general approval

## US and Britain to test Iraq

Mark Tran in New York and Ian Black in London

THE United States and Britain will quickly test Iraq's readiness to keep its agreement with the United Nations, as they try to blind Russia and France into a pledge of automatic air strikes if Saddam Hussein triggers a new crisis over weapons inspections.

Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, returned from his make-or-break mission to Baghdad yesterday to cheer crowds of UN employees, and praised the role played by President Bill Clinton and Tony Blair — whom he termed "perfect UN peacekeepers" — in persuading the Iraqi leader to back down.

Iraq continued to trumpet victory over its enemies. Its deputy premier, Tariq Aziz, claimed the 11th-hour agree-

ment had brought "excellent gains" that meant punitive UN economic sanctions would eventually be lifted.

But the US made clear there would be a quick test of Iraqi intentions, with Richard Butler, chairman of the UN special commission, Unscow, visiting Baghdad next week to ensure immediate implementation. Washington kept up a drumbeat of warning, as its UN ambassador, Tom Ricks, called for an "enforcement initiative" in a Security Council resolution that would warn Iraq of "serious consequences" if it reneged.

In the Commons in London, Mr Blair used near-identical language about the proposed British resolution to lock President Saddam into the Baghdad agreement. "This must make clear that any further prevarication or obstruction of the smooth operation of inspections... will not be accepted by any member of

the Security Council and will inescapably be followed by the most severe consequences for the Iraqi regime," he said.

British diplomats said they hoped to push through the resolution within the next few days. "It should be easier to get the French on board now Annan is back with a deal," one said.

But France repeated that it would not support any resolution allowing automatic attacks if Iraq breached the accord. Russia is likely to follow suit.

France's president, Jacques Chirac, discussed a possible joint resolution with the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, yesterday after having a similar discussion late on Monday with Mr Clinton. His foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, insisted: "It will be up to the Security Council to see if there is trickery or not... not just the US."

Where the French were op-

timistic, Madeleine Albright, the US secretary of state, said there were "questions and ambiguities" in Mr Annan's agreement, and that the US would close "any loopholes".

Strikingly, however — and whatever Mr Aziz claims — the seven-point deal gives Iraq little more than the face-saving formula of allowing diplomats to accompany UN weapons inspectors on visits to "presidential sites" where chemical and biological weapons may be concealed.

Mrs Albright told the Senate foreign relations committee: "This may be acceptable if the inspectors are free to conduct rigorous inspections."

Mr Blair made clear there would be no immediate change in the readiness of British or US armed forces in the Gulf. Sanctions would remain until full compliance with UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction. "We will not tolerate any

repetition of the Iraqi behaviour which has led to this agreement," he warned. "We are not going to play more elaborate diplomatic games that allow Saddam Hussein to thwart the inspections regime which he has now agreed."

Hundreds of employees applauded and cheered Mr Annan as he arrived at UN headquarters in scenes of jubilation not seen for years. Staff heard him describe his mission as "a wonderful example of what the UN should be about". Clearly tired from his exertions, Mr Annan said: "There were millions of people around the world rooting for peace, that is why I say you should never underestimate the power of prayer."

After briefing the Security Council, Mr Annan said he had received the general approval of the 15 members to the agreement, although details remained to be worked out. Mr Annan said the latest

accord should work because there was a qualitative difference between it and past understandings.

This is the first time an agreement had been negotiated by President Saddam himself, he said, describing the Iraqi leader as calm, well-informed and decisive. "The [Iraqi] leadership has got the message to co-operate with Unscow," he said.

Mr Annan said he established a good human rapport with President Saddam, who told the secretary-general: "I know I can do business with you, I think I can trust you."

Mr Annan sought to dispel the notion that the new arrangement would undermine Mr Butler, who has been roundly criticised by the Iraqis. He remains the head of Unscow, Mr Annan said.

Long camp in Gulf, page 6; Leader comment and letters, page 9



Models on the catwalk yesterday as Paul Smith showed off his winter collection during London Fashion Week

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEFAN ROUSSEAU (left) and PAUL HACKETT

## Girls will be boys in Smith debut

Susanah Frankel  
Fashion Editor

IT was a great moment for British fashion when Paul Smith took to the London catwalk for the first time yesterday. While Smith shows his menswear line in Paris, London will be home to his womenswear from now on.

The designer introduced womenswear to his repertoire four years ago in response to women borrowing their boyfriends' "Smithy" clothing, as he puts it.

Not surprisingly, more than half of his debut London show was taken up by masculine good looks. There were taupe trouser-suits boasting Smith's signature windowpane check, in this instance in lilac — the colour was picked up in jacket linings and skirts — and there were grey pin-stripes worn with crisp white shirts and, for the eve-

ning, immaculate black velvet creations. Rather than copying his menswear, however, Smith was ever mindful of the female form — a nipped-in waist here, a pair of cigarette-slim trousers there. More overtly feminine were crushed velvet, empire-line dresses in dusty pink and old gold worn with pretty embroidered kimonos.

Nothing is more indicative of London's augmented status as a fashion capital to rival Paris and Milan than Smith's decision to show. He has always been deeply patriotic but declined to show in London because "it's not where the business is".

Now though, London Fashion Week is a very different affair. "Our designers are bringing in the goods and I'm very happy to show here for that reason," he said. If yesterday's reception was anything to go by, Britain is very happy to have him too.

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## Judge sexually harassed pupil

continued from page 1  
had personally suffered it. The findings because no complaints had ever been lodged with the Bar Council. But women barristers said pupils did not complain for fear of blighting their careers. A squeeze on numbers means only half of those who pass the Bar exams can expect to find positions in chambers.

Following the research the Bar brought in a five-point strategy to tackle harassment — an advice hotline; "strong advice" to chambers on handling complaints; a panel of barristers to advise complainants and mediate; streamlined complaints procedures; and, as a last resort, a scheme under which chambers volunteer to take in pupils driven out by harassment.

A follow-up study by the Sheffield Institute, to be published soon, shows that harassment is now seen as less of a problem than in 1993. But a senior QC recently left one set of chambers for another leading set after admit-

ting making unwanted advances to a chambers employee. No formal complaint was made.

In another case, a male pupil has accused a female barrister of harassing him, but no complaint has reached the Bar Council.

Nigel Pascoe QC, chairman of the Bar's public affairs committee, said: "The Bar will not tolerate harassment of any barrister or pupil. They are in a very vulnerable position. We have now a code in place to prevent this happening and I am confident that harassment today is rare."

Mr Sutton-Mattocks's chambers said he was out of the country and not available for comment. A senior clerk said: "We have no comment to make."

A spokeswoman for the Lord Chancellor's Department said Lord Irvine would have to decide whether Mr Sutton-Mattocks should remain as a recorder once he was notified of the tribunal's findings.

## Guardian wins Press Club award

Staff Reporter  
THE Guardian yesterday won a prestigious award from the London Press Club for its investigation into the disgraced former Conservative MP Jonathan Aitken.

The paper was commended for its "brilliantly reported and well-structured" investigation into the disgraced former Conservative MP Jonathan Aitken.

Boh Edwards, chairman of the judges, and a former national newspaper editor, paid tribute to the Guardian's award-winning editorial team.

He said: "Their aim was to establish the truth about a grave and scandalous matter concerning a Privy Counsellor. They showed true grit in standing up to Mr Aitken and his pompous threats."

The Freedom of the Press Award was presented to the Guardian's editor, Alan

Rushdridge, by Charles Overby, of the Freedom Forum, an American journalistic foundation.

The Guardian's team included comment editor David Leigh and reporters David Pallister, Luke Harding and Owen Bowcott.

Other awards were won by Simon Jenkins, columnist for the Times and Evening Standard, and Charles Miller, the Press Association's defence and diplomatic reporter.

Miller won Scoop of the Year for breaking the story of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, from Manila airport last August, while with the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook during his Far East tour.

Robbie McKie, of the Observer, was highly commended for breaking the story of the cloning of Dolly the sheep.

Scotland Yard has yet to conclude its nine-month investigation into the Jonathan Aitken affair.

## Review

## Finding serenity amid the chaos

Alfred Hickling

Vietnam Philharmonic/  
Riccardo Muti  
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

HOW do you persuade people to listen to Paul Hindemith? One way is to engage a world-class orchestra and star conductor. Another is to harness him to a central 19th-century symphony as Brahms and leave you to form your own conclusions.

The visit of the Vienna Philharmonic under Riccardo Muti is perhaps the first time an orchestra of truly sublime status has bathed in the warm acoustics of Manchester Bridgewater Hall, and happily they have brought Hindemith with them.

Hindemith's second symphony is enigmatic almost to the point of invisibility: no programme, no number, no grandiose title, and not many performances in this country recently.

It does have a key, however. E flat, from which it adventurously sets out and obligingly returns 40 breathtaking minutes later, confounding along the way every remaining prejudice about audience-hostile earache still clinging to early 20th-century orchestral music.

Composed in 1940 and nestling between the better-known Mahler and the more famous Mahler, the E flat offers no literary or historical clues.

There is nothing to decode. Nonetheless, it was written by a composer forced to flee to America a year after the outbreak of the second world war.

## Southall rail crash inquiry delay

Keith Harper  
Transport Editor

THE public will be kept informed on safety issues raised by the Southall rail crash last September in which seven people died, the inquiry chairman, John Uff, promised yesterday.

The inquiry into the worst rail accident since the Clapham disaster in 1989 was opened and adjourned, the

And in this sense it is the sound of an artist trying to salvage meaning, even beauty, from a world pitched into catastrophe — prefiguring Bernstein and echoing Auden in his agitated response to the age of anxiety.

What is surprising, however, is the overall coherence, even serenity, of the piece. Having stared into the abyss, Hindemith came up with the conclusion that there is plenty worth living for, after all.

This was the man who wrote perhaps the most important treatise on tonality this century, having opted not to colour his canvases with chaos. Nor is Muti inclined to let the work unfold without undue restraint.

Padding towards the podium with the stiff-backed, panther-footed tread of someone with either extreme authority or an appalling migraine, this was a performance marked with precision and discipline, coaxed from one of the few orchestras in the world equipped to provide him with what he was looking for.

Brahms's second symphony sounds familiar, tame, even remote, in this company. The Vienna Philharmonic play Brahms like most people breathe oxygen, of course, although even the immaculate brass had gone slightly off the boil after the interval.

No matter: to tickle a Manchester audience already beside themselves with delight, Muti coyly announced a bonus pairing of Josef Strauss polkas — one fast, the other furious — which emphatically put the icing on the sachertorte.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

official investigation may take 18 months to complete. Professor Uff said: "No one should have the impression that these matters will not be considered until after this inquiry is completed."

The reason for the inquiry delay is that a decision is still awaited on whether criminal prosecutions will be taken against the driver, Larry Harrison, currently on bail, or Great Western Trains or Railtrack.





Robert Johnson  
1911-1938

Cover versions... the limited recordings of hard-living, hard-playing Robert Johnson still influence musicians 60 years after he died from drinking poisoned whiskey

## Devilish good fortune for son of bluesman

Ed Vulliamy in New York

A COURT in Mississippi has settled a wrangle over inheritance rights to the music of the century's most obscure genius, the extraordinary Robert Johnson, master of the blues, noble, womaniser and pactmaker with the devil.

Ownership of Johnson's legendary songs and out-takes — the influence of which has resounded through the histories of jazz, blues and rock — now pass to his illegitimate son, Claud.

Johnson was poisoned to death, intestate, in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1938. For the past six years, Claud Johnson has challenged two other relatives, Robert Harris and Anne Anderson, for rights to the haunting and haunted music of his father.

Anderson, who has been executor of the estate for several years, joined Harris in trying to block the claim which Claud Johnson brought in 1992.

But the Mississippi court threw out their argument that Claud had waited too long to bring his action, and decreed him owner of his father's "music, likeness and story".

Claud now stands to take at least a cut of future revenue generated by the music and other legacies — some \$3 million to date, none of which has gone to Johnson's descendants.

Most of the money from record sales, limited edition guitars, books and film has thus far gone to Columbia Records and some to blues historian Stephen LaVere, who has devoted his life to researching Johnson's music and in 1973 bought limited rights from Johnson's now deceased half-sister Carrie Spencer.

Robert Johnson was born the grandson of slaves near Hazlehurst, Mississippi, in 1911. He was an illegitimate child whose mother, Julia Dodds, worked the first years of his life in migrant labour camps, before moving to Memphis to bring him up as Robert Spencer in a ménage-

a-trois. In 1920, Julia Dodds moved again, to Robinsville, Mississippi, where her son's music career began.

The young Johnson was a neglected child but soon met the masters of the Mississippi Delta blues, Willie Brown and bluesman-preacher Son House, who were playing the "lock joints" in Robinsville.

First performing on the steps of the local courthouse, Johnson went on to synthesize everything that had come before him in the blues, and to dictate everything that would follow.

Johnson spent his life crisscrossing the Delta of the Depression years, finding a woman with whom to stay in every town, and went north to play the subterranean dives in the slums of Detroit, New York and Chicago.

He took the oral traditions of the rural blues — field hollers of defiance, chants of tribulation, and bottleneck guitar — stretched their limits musically and emotionally, and forged his own inimitable style.

Only 11 78 rpm records of Johnson's songs were released during his lifetime. As with so many artists of genius, his influence came later.

Bluesmen who took on the Johnson legacy included Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Johnny Shines, Memphis Slim, Muddy Waters and Elmore James, while among today's rock stars Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones claim him as a profound influence.

The themes of Johnson's music were despair, self-destruction, constant rambling, homesickness for places that had come with hindsight to represent happiness, and pursuit by demons.

His fervent music was so remarkable that he was commonly believed to have made a pact with the devil — at a crossroads and at midnight — in exchange for the gift of his voice and mastery over the guitar.

Johnson's most famous song, Cross Road Blues, concerns a rendezvous with the devil on a lonely intersection. It is a haunting work, de-

### Singing the praises



**Keith Richards:**  
"The greatest folk blues guitarist that ever lived." "He was like a comet or a meteor that — boom — came along suddenly. He raised the ante and suddenly you had to aim that much higher."



**Alexis Korner, the godfather of British blues:**  
"It would be impossible to overestimate Johnson's importance either as a performer or style setter for later blues artists." "He communicates the kind of delicious vision one aspires to with William Blake."

rived from the African/slave cult of the trickster God Legba, of whom Johnson no doubt knew, and who collected souls at a crossroads.

Johnson sang with a muffled diction, in a voice which is nonetheless passionate, intense and tortured. Listening to it is like having some raw, exposed nerve stroked just a little too roughly.

With his spidery fingers, he played the guitar so that it sounds like three instruments at once.

**Eric Clapton:**  
"Both of the Robert Johnson albums cover all of my desires musically. Every angle of emotion is expressed on both those albums."

"It came as something of a shock to me that there could be anything that powerful. It seemed to call to me in my confusion."

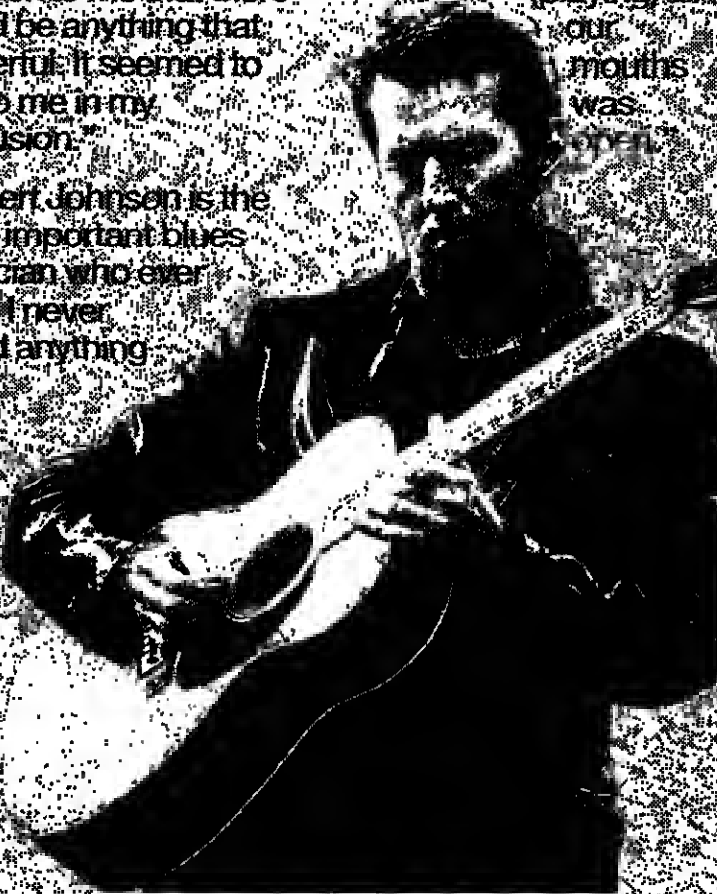
"Robert Johnson is the most important blues musician who ever lived. I never found anything

more deeply soulful. His music remains the most powerful cry that I think you can find in the human voice."

**Blues singer who travelled with Johnson:**  
"His home was where his hat was and sometimes he didn't even know where that was."

**Son House, legendary blues guitarist and contemporary of Johnson:**  
"He sold his soul to the devil to get to play like that."

"When he got through (playing) all our mouths were open."



## Princess Margaret stable after stroke

Luke Harding

PRINCESS Margaret was recovering in hospital in Barbados last night after suffering a mild stroke while holidaying on the Caribbean island of Mustique.

The princess, who is 67, was in a stable condition, Buckingham Palace said.

She collapsed at 10pm on Monday while being entertained by friends. She was treated at an island clinic but returned home when it was found she was well enough to walk.

She had been due to leave Mustique yesterday, after nearly three weeks, to continue her holiday in St Lucia. Instead, she was flown by air ambulance to Barbados for further hospital tests.

The princess is responding well to treatment and has suffered no serious paralysis, it is understood.

Ken Will, assistant to the director of the Mustique Company, which runs the island, said: "She was able to walk from her car across the tarmac to the plane. She was also sitting on the plane."

"Certainly at this stage the signs are positive. She has been consulted throughout and is fully cognizant. A decision was taken not to fly her off the island immediately but to wait until Tuesday afternoon instead."

She was accompanied to Barbados by Michael Bunn, Mustique's doctor, who has supervised her treatment. Her doctors in London have also been consulted. Tests to assess her condition were expected to be carried out at one of the two main hospitals in Barbados — the Bayview and the Queen Elizabeth — before she is flown back to Britain.

Despite her hard-drinking, chain-smoking image, the Queen's younger sister has been in reasonable health since 1993, when she suffered a bout of pneumonia and was admitted to hospital. She gave up smoking some years ago.

In 1985 she was at the centre of a cancer scare and had

surgery to remove a small area of her left lung, which proved to be benign. She last appeared in public earlier this month, on a visit to the Queen Mother, who was recovering in a London hospital from her hip operation.

Lord Snowdon, her former husband, was last night said to be "most concerned" about the princess. Her son, David Linley, and his wife, Serena, had been holidaying with her until Sunday, when they moved to Florida where Viscount Linley is preparing to exhibit his furniture.

Princess Margaret spends an annual holiday on Mustique, where she has a hilltop villa, and she has many friends on the island.

She was introduced to Mustique by Colin Tennant, now Lord Glenconner, who gave her a 10-acre estate on the island for a wedding present in 1960. She has enjoyed the gift ever since, and her court parties there have become legendary.

In recent years, she has concentrated on charity engagements and her family, spending much time with the Queen and the Queen Mother at Sandringham.

The Queen yesterday pressed on with her official engagements, which included knighting the singer Elton John at an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace.



Princess Margaret: able to walk to evacuation plane

## Israel's rabbis put curfew on women

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

SOMETIMES it's hard to be a woman. It just got harder in Israel, where a panel of rabbis has ruled that wives must be home by midnight.

The early doors declaration of the rabbinical court of Haifa was prompted by divorce proceedings by a man who complained his wife was in the habit of visiting singles bars and staying out until the morning.

Under Israeli law there is no civil marriage or divorce and Jews seeking a legal separation must apply to their local rabbinical court, even if they are not religious.

The declaration has been endorsed by the chief rabbinical court in Jerusalem, but would be virtually impossible to enforce.

According to the newspaper Yediot Aharanot, which reported the case without names, the man's wife protested to the rabbis: "But he is sleeping with other women." Al-

though the court conceded that this, too, was "insufferable", the rabbis insisted the wife should be home by midnight.

"And then people wonder why we want a separation of state and religion?" Naomi Chazan, an MP for the leftwing Meretz party, said yesterday when she heard the news. "This decision is so paternalistic it takes Israel back to the Middle Ages."

This is not the first time that women have come in for special attention from Israel's rabbis. Last year Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of the government's ultra-Orthodox partner, Shas, warned women that if they took a shower on the Sabbath they were committing a crime.

Another venerated sage, Rabbi Kadouri, who last week threw a protective mystical cloak over Israel when he boarded a plane and flew around its borders, chanting prayers and cursing Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, proclaimed women would "burn in hell" if they wore wigs.

# brain@size.pea

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The Guardian  
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**A**

zsm. MIS gave Patrick Daly \$400,000 in resettlement payments to inform on the Irish National Liberation Army.

What he told MIS led to the arrest of two INLA agents convicted in 1993 of conspiracy to cause explosions. Daly had been offered, and was given, a grant of £40,000 if the arrest led to a 'good custodial' sentence.

In Gallagher's case, it was claimed at a pre-trial hearing that, during a taped interview with Gallagher, police officers offered him \$1 million, a new house and a passport page in exchange for information relating to the mortar attack. The alleged offer was not mentioned in court, partly because it would have enabled the prosecution to present to the jury a picture of a financially demanding, glibly

ment of teachers on a minute-by-minute basis in their classrooms.

"If these ideas are wrong-headed, then no amount of energy and dedication will stop the process of education from running into the sand."

Opting out by all state schools was "the next natural step" in Conservative education reforms, but under Labour the pendulum was swinging back in favour of local education authorities.

He was horrified by the signs that some teachers and members are relishing the prospect of involving themselves in all 'their' schools"

Mr Woodhead is expected to explain his fears at a Guardian education debate next week with Tim Brighouse, chief executive of the Birmingham Education Trust.

He called on the Government to influence how teachers taught. It should take advantage of the next scheduled reform of the national curriculum in 2000 to concentrate on the basics.

Ministers should ignore the excess of academic unworshipfulness of Robin Alexander and the "millennial natter" of Ted Wragg – two notorious members of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority responsible for the review.

The authority was ignoring the evidence that the intellectual standards of GCSE and A level exams had slipped.

**A** LEADING figure in the loyalist Apprentice Boys organisation was yesterday confirmed as one of the commissioners who will rule on contentious parades in Northern Ireland this year.

Another loyalist, who played a crucial role in the Protestant workers' strike of 1974, is also being paid £25,000 a year to play his part.

Nationalists reacted angrily at the appointments of "Communist" and "cross-community" worker and Apprentice Boy, and Glen Barr, former leader of the Ulster Defence Association when it defected to the Republic.

The appointments follow the resignations of two commissioners of two respected members, Rev Roy Magee, who has close links to loyalist paramilitaries and helped arrange the 1974 ceasefire, and Anthony McEvoy, a former member who quit for personal reasons.



# Germaine Greer writes sequel to ground-breaking feminist text



**Book first published in 1970**

may desire, no holds are barred."

In the Female Ennuch she argued that women were unable to chase their desires. She now believes women's consent to sexual acts because it would be "uncool" not to, and many get hurt in the process.

"When I wrote The Female Ennuch women who were interested in women's magazines wrote to me whether they should have sex or not, what they should do to attract and/or keep a man, how to tell whether a man's hands were fooling around," she said.

"In the last issue of the Australian magazine Cleo, I was interviewed by a resident doctor who asked what she should do about the damage to her vagina caused by her boyfriend's 'super enthusiastic use of a vibrator' and Cleo's doctor did not surmise

she ditch the boyfriend." Although women are not always right, Ms Green argues, men have found other ways to damage them. "They [women] are not in a position to demand basic consideration from any man they are told to 'go out and bang,' especially as it is understood that getting drunk is a prerequisite," she said. "Shagging has become a substitute for conversation. Necking, being foreplay by whatever time, are things of the past."

Marianne Velmans, Doubay's publishing director, said she was thrilled to get the book, which will go on sale in spring 1999. "The bold Woman will be required reading for thinking adults everywhere in the world. It is the book that will be waiting for, not only to survive the debate, but to re-invent the issues for a new

Robert Kline, of the Lower Ontario Action Group, based in Belfast, said, "There was a little or no confidence in the Parades Commission and now it's got even worse."

"There is this ridiculous notion that if you have three commissioners and three trustees, then the commission is balanced, but it doesn't work like that."

Mo Mowlam, Northern Ireland Secretary, said the commission, which will rule on remaining of marches, was no panacea and was an improvement on the "old right wing conception" that went back to 1945.

Ms Mowlam admitted it had been difficult to get members of the republican community to serve on the commission.

There are now nationalist on board. But Anne McCormack, a former member of the police authority, and so-called Aidan Canavan.

Mowlam said the presence of nationalists on the commission would be balanced by the fact that decisions were taken on a corporate basis.

**Ruaridh Nicol**

**G**ERMAINE Greer is doing what she once said was unthinkable. She is to write a sequel to *The Female Eunuch*. Or rather she is rewriting her landmark feminist text, saying that the problems women faced in the 1960s have changed so dramati-

The book, *The Whole Woman*, was sold to Doubleday for close to \$500,000 this week. Its themes will reflect a speech Ms Greer gave at the Melbourne Book Festival last year and subsequently published in *The Observer*.

"In 1968, women had the right to say no without apology; what they didn't

have was the right to say yes," she said. "Now they have a duty to say yes to whatever their nation

## Marks & Spencer sues Granada over claim it exploited child labour

**Amelia Gentleman**

**M**ARKS & SPENCER had the reputation "savaged" by a television documentary on child labour in a North African factory that made its goods sold in its stores, the High Court was told yesterday.

Opening a libel action by M & S against Granada Television, George Carman QC said the exposure of conditions at its factory in Morocco, the World in Action programme had suggested to millions of viewers that M & S "knowingly and recklessly exploited child labour to boost sales".

The programme was also alleged to have accused M & S of misleading its customers by selling clothes made in Morocco under "Made in the UK" labels.

Granada insisted in court

that the programme meant M & S had fallen "far short of the high standards which it has usually and repeatedly provided for itself as a caring and ethical business, and we could not maintain the close supervision of and checks upon its suppliers which it has always had."

M & S, it said, had failed to discover or take adequate steps to prevent the exploitation of child labour in poor conditions and the "shell game" gamesters were playing in the UK with the result that customers might be misled.

Sir Richard Greenbury, chairman of M & S, was present. The directors watched a 25-minute documentary, "Michael: Has the Halo Appeared?", broadcast in January 1996.

It centred on the Sicome factory at Meknes, which

of garments a year for an Ulster clothing manufacturers Desmond and Sons, which supplies M & S.

One female at the factory, whose words were spoken by an actress in the programme, said workers were paid a "pittance", and that conditions were "terrible".

Girl workers, many of

Both M & S and Desmond and Sons stated in the programme that they had been assured that no one under the age of 15 was employed at the factory.

**➡ Not surprisingly, the women JD Salinger has fallen in love with bear more than a passing resemblance to his fictional creations.**  
Kiss and tell

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Millennium plan unveiled

# Welcome to the pleasure dome

Dan Gledhill  
Arts Correspondent

**A**RIDE through a dream world on giant floating beds, a visit to a seaside resort with a difference, and a virtual reality playground were just three of the ideas for the Millennium Dome unveiled by Tony Blair yesterday.

A model of the much-talked about giant human figure was also revealed, although organisers refused to say whether it would be male or female.

Presenting what was billed as a "re-launch" of the £738 million project Mr Blair hailed the dome as a huge asset for the country. It would, he said, be a "symbol of British confidence and a monument to our creativity and a fantastic day out."

Peter Mandelson, the minister without portfolio, in charge of the project, said: "If the Millennium Dome is a success, it will never be forgotten. If it is a failure, we will never be forgiven."

Organisers announced £58.8 million of sponsorship for the project, with British Telecom, Tesco, Manpower and BSKYB each committing £12 million. A further £16 million has been pledged but awaits detailed negotiations, taking the total to almost £75 million, half the target figure.

The seven zones unveiled yesterday, representing just under half the dome's final contents, all reflect the design brief to combine learning and entertainment, technology and spirituality. Each zone will consume £5 million to £5 million of the budget. The Body Zone's giant human figure will tower over the other exhibits, to be arranged

are expressed through faith and belief. The zone will make use of natural materials and water to create what organisers call "oases of calm and reflection."

**LICENSED TO SKILL** and **THE LEARNING CURVE** Jennie Page, chief executive of the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC), said of the work zone: "It may sound worthy but in reality it will be fun. There will be 400 people in virtual reality helmets exploring new ways of work."

The zone aims to illustrate the changing nature of work and extend the virtues of the flexible labour market. Alongside it will be The Learning Curve, a zone exploring the classroom of the future.

**SERIOUS PLAY** The final zone unveiled yesterday. The most technologically advanced of the zones, from the outside it appears to be a sci-fi film set, perhaps a lunar station. Inside, a moving pavement will take visitors on a route through a canopy made of an inflated transparent skin that gently rises and falls. At the end of the ride visitors will enter a millennium products area, featuring leisure ideas for the next century.

The six zones yet to be unveiled are The Mind, TransAction, which will examine the role of money and finance; Shared Ground, looking at the future around the country; Atmosphere, about the planet; and Time To Talk, dedicated to communications. The final zone, unknown, will provide a forum to address national identity.

There will be three performances each day in the plaza which will attempt to bring together all the disparate elements of the exhibition. Originally to be run by theatrical impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh, the show will now be staged by musician Peter Gabriel and Mark Fisher, who mounts shows for the Rolling Stones and other rock acts. The central show, which will play to 16,000 people, will be based around the idea of a millennium fable.

Evoking the atmosphere of New Year's Eve 1999 — the dome's opening night — Mr Blair told an audience of business leaders: "The eyes of the world will turn to the spot where the new millennium begins — the meridian line at Greenwich. This is Britain's opportunity to greet the world with a celebration that is so bold, so beautiful, so inspiring that it embodies at once the spirit of confidence and adventure in Britain and the spirit of the future in the world."

But the political row surrounding the £738 million project continued, with Tory culture spokesman Francis Maude renewing his attack on what he terms the "appropriation" of the project by Labour for party political purposes.

"Is Tony Blair big enough to declare the Millennium Dome a politician-free zone, or is he too mesmerised by the prospect of grandstanding before the world in the year before the election?"

Michael Heseltine, who as deputy prime minister launched the project and now represents the Tories on millennium matters, said: "I have access to all the information and I play what role I can in the decision-making process."

"The Conservative Party is represented at the heart of the matter. I will ensure that this is a project for the nation. It is not a party political activity."

Echoing a call by the dome's architect, Lord Rogers, for a single creative figure to assume creative leadership of the project, a "ringmaster" or a "ringmaster", Mr Maude called for the appointment of a non-political figure to run the scheme, to replace Mr Mandelson.

Visitors will enter through a door at the small of the back. From there a lift will take them to the figure's head, where they go back to the rest of the dome. Back at ground level, visitors will be taken on a moving walkway along the figure's outstretched leg, while biological and visual representations are projected on the walls.

Once outside the body, visitors will see live exhibits and a perpetually running medical TV programme and will be able to assess their own health on running machines.

The aim, said designer Jonathan Swaby, was to explore. The 5,000 visitors expected each hour would be prompted to ponder on our species.

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Bus driver John, a former engineering worker, agreed. "It seems a awful lot of money when people are complaining about hospitals and the homeless and it'll be for such a short term, won't it? What will they do afterwards with it? Everyone I meet is very sceptical."

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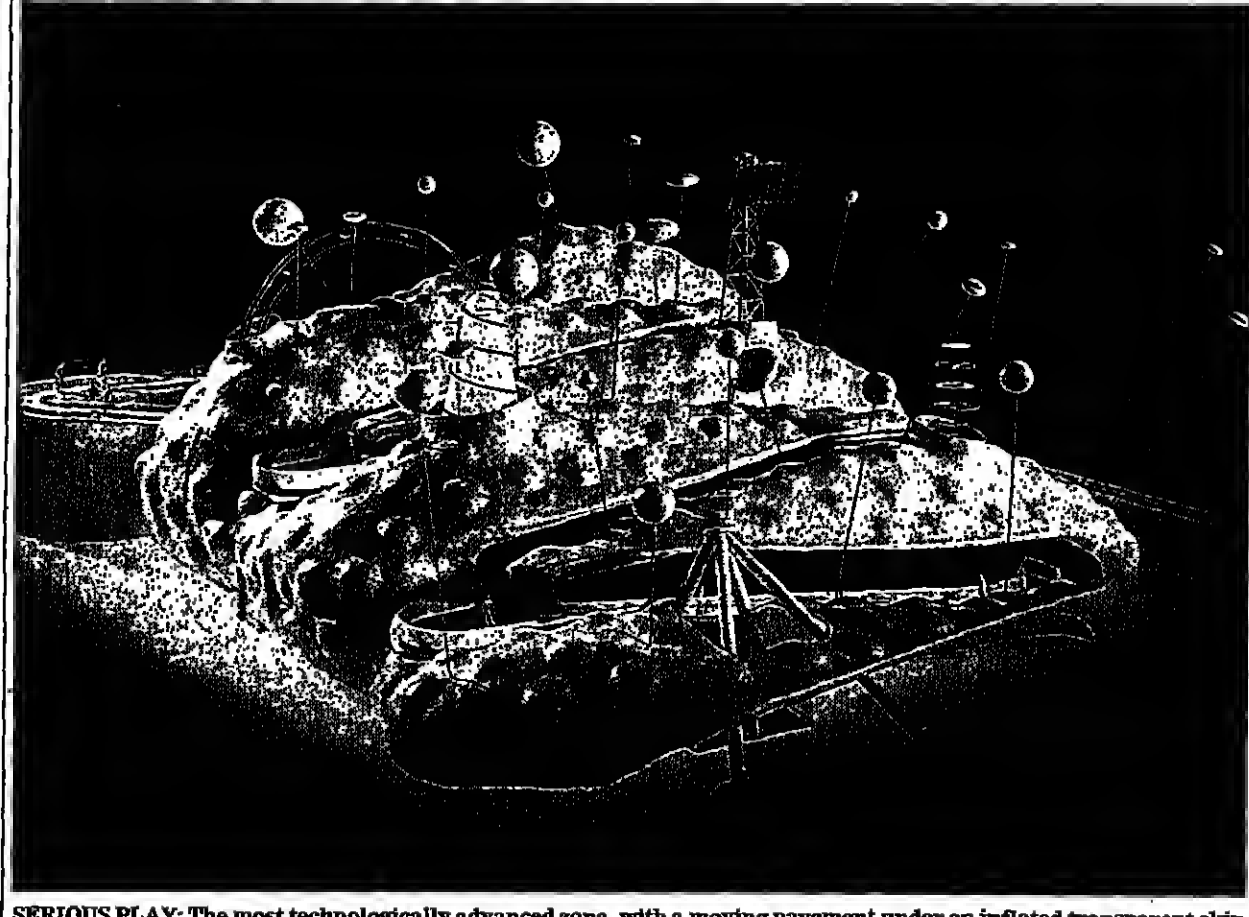
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DREAMSCAPE: Giant beds floating on a river which flows through four environments

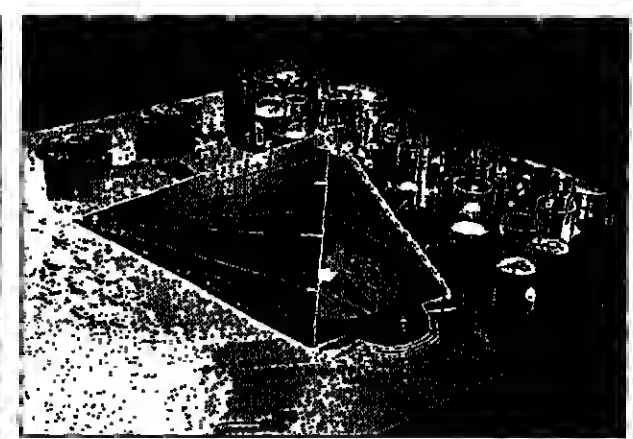
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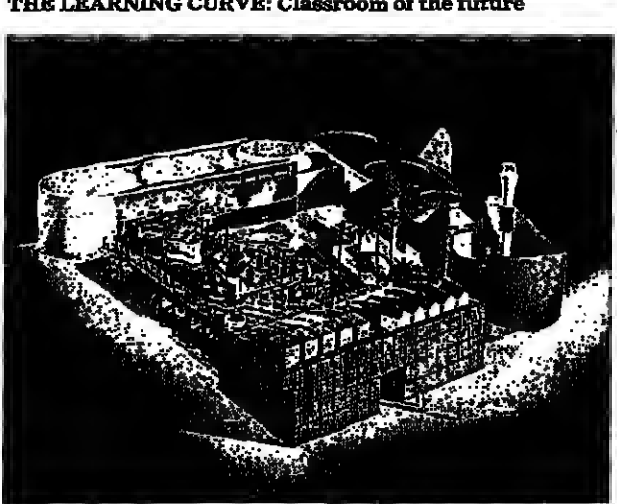
SERIOUS PLAY: The most technologically advanced zone, with a moving pavement under an inflated transparent skin



THE LEARNING CURVE: Classroom of the future



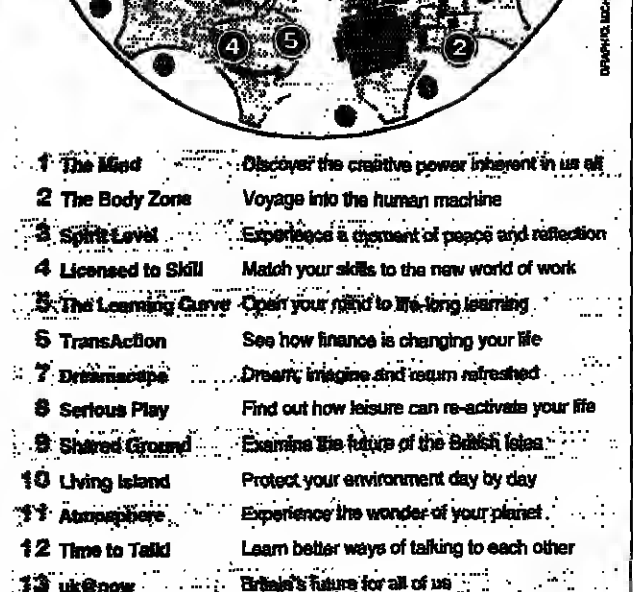
THE SPIRIT LEVEL: 'Oases of calm and reflection'



THE LIVING ISLAND: Seaside resort with serious purpose



A guide inside...



PICTURES: HAYES DAVIDSON

## Project finds little enthusiasm far from Greenwich

Peter Hetherington tests the water among Mandelson's constituents

**M**ORE than 200 miles north of Greenwich, the people who put the millennium minister into Parliament appeared unimpressed by the dome's announcement.

"No doubt it will become a major attraction for our southern purple cousins to visit," thundered a correspondent to the Hartlepool Mail.

"How many people in the North does he think can afford to take time off work — if they are lucky enough to be working — or finance a trip to London, pay for a hotel, pay entrance fees to see what another yuppie has found to appeal to a working man and his family?"

But the letter to editor Peter Barron was one of the few to criticise the local MP and Minister without Portfolio. "It is something so distant — London — that they're not bothered," said Mr Barron, fresh from a meeting to discuss what Hartlepool itself should arrange for the dawn of 2000.

"People here have a very strong local identity and are not too bothered about what is going on outside."

Nevertheless, the £750 million project occupied a full page in last night's newspaper, with the writer even suggesting that "nursing psychiatrists" had claimed that the Minister without Portfolio was obsessed with making the Millennium Dome a success because his grandfather, Herbert Morrison, never got sufficient recognition for his role in the 1951 Festival of Britain.

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# Raging De Niro KOs France

Jon Herley in Paris

**R**OBERT DE NIRO, interrogated by Paris police for nine hours earlier this month about his possible connections with a high-class international call-girl ring, said yesterday that he was so angry that he would never again set foot in France.

"I am way beyond what you'd call furious," he told Le Monde newspaper. "I will never come back to France. I will advise my friends not to come to France. I couldn't give a damn about the Cannes film festival."

He said he would return the Légion d'honneur medal, awarded at last year's Cannes festival for his services to the film industry, to the French

embassy "as soon as I can". "I don't see any reason why I should hang on to that thing, which comes from a country which flouts its own motto of liberty, equality and fraternity."

De Niro had been in France intermittently since October, shooting scenes for a John Frankenheimer film, Ronin, when he was picked up at his Paris hotel on February 10.

He was interviewed as a witness by six police officers and an examining magistrate, Frédéric N'Guyen. Mr N'Guyen is heading the investigation into a \$5,000-a-night call-girl ring for the international internet allegedly run by a former Swedish model and a French pornographer.

Well-known people questioned by the judges include the former Polish tennis star Wojtek Fibak and Alain



**'I knew one and I had met two of them. But had I paid for them? I have never paid for a woman in my life'**

Sarda, a French film producer. Mr N'Guyen has said he would like to interview Brigitte Nielsen, the former wife of Sylvester Stallone.

De Niro denied all knowledge of the ring. "They had no charge against me whatsoever," he said.

"They wanted too show me

photos of young women and see if I knew them. Yes, I knew one and I had met two of them."

"But had I paid for them? I have never paid for a woman in my life. And even if I had, it wouldn't be a crime."

De Niro, best known for his roles in Raging Bull and Taxi

Driver, which won the best film award at Cannes in 1976, said he was told his name had been found in the diary of one of the suspects.

"I had been seen in a villa," he said. "So what? I can spend hours in a villa, meet people, exchange phone numbers, it's part of normal life."

His lawyer, Georges Kiejman, has lodged a formal complaint against the judge for "violation of secrecy in an investigation" and "obstruction of freedom of movement". De Niro said the judge had clearly abused his authority.

"The judge was cold... I think he was hostile to me from the start. Nine hours of interrogation to try and tie me in with other people's problems. I don't know what his problem is, but he really has one. He talks about rich

and famous people like he's obsessed. He sees himself as the saviour of badly treated girls."

"Even the police seemed embarrassed by his way of doing things."

News of the 54-year-old actor's questioning spread rapidly and he was greeted by hordes of photographers as he left the court house.

He said his pregnant wife and his mother, who has a heart condition, had suffered equally from the publicity.

"I've been forced to explain to my family that I'm the innocent victim, but there is always that bad saying 'where there's a smoke, there's a fire'."

He added: "France is known for being a land of liberty. It was to France that the filmmakers who were victims of McCarthyism came to take refuge. Not to be harassed."

## News in brief

### Starr summons Clinton allies

PROSECUTOR Kenneth Starr yesterday summoned a White House aide and a private investigator retained by President Clinton's lawyers to the court-house where a grand jury is investigating the White House sex scandal.

Escalating a nasty legal fight with the Clinton camp, Mr Starr subpoenaed a White House communications adviser, Sidney Blumenthal, and a private investigator, Terry Linnier, to apparently question them about anti-prosecution mud-slinging.

Mr Starr, who is investigating allegations that President Clinton had an affair with a former White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, and urged her to lie about it, is angry about efforts to spread damaging information about his team and believes it may be obstruction of justice, sources said. — *Reuters, Washington.*

### Mossad boss resigns

THE chief of Mossad, Israel's external intelligence agency, tendered his resignation yesterday less than a week after being criticised in an official report on a failed bid to assassinate an Islamic political leader in Jordan.

Danny Yatom submitted his resignation to the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, but strongly objected to the report's conclusions, which said he bore "a heavy responsibility" for the bungled attempt to kill a Hamas official, Khalid Meshal, in Amman last September.

Mr Netanyahu accepted the resignation, although Mr Yatom will stay on until a replacement is appointed. Mr Yatom had been expected to go quietly later this year, allowing him to preserve some dignity. — *David Sharrock, Jerusalem.*

### Virtue replaces Welfare

TURKEY'S Islamists yesterday relaunched their cause under a new banner after their flagship Welfare Party was outlawed by the constitutional court. More than 100 former Welfare deputies joined the Virtue Party, which was to inaugurate its parliamentary life at a meeting in a chamber of the national assembly.

Turkey froze the bank accounts of the Virtue Party yesterday after sealing its headquarters in the final stages of dissolving the party, the official gazette said. — *Reuters, Ankara.*

### Refugees flee Sierra Leone

ABOUT 1,000 refugees a day are fleeing Sierra Leone's war on foot into neighbouring Liberia, the United Nations refugee agency said yesterday.

A spokesman, Paul Stromberg, said the refugees were fleeing fighting in the eastern Sierra Leone towns of Bonthe and Kono between troops loyal to the military junta ousted from the capital Freetown a week ago and the Nigerian-led Economic force. About 14,000 Sierra Leone refugees had arrived in Liberia this month, he said. — *Reuters, Geneva.*

### Georgian hostages party

ON THE sixth day of a hostage stand-off in Georgia, television footage yesterday showed kidnappers and their five UN captives sharing food, wine and jokes in the western village of Dzikhskhari while negotiators worked toward high-level bids to resolve the crisis.

In Moscow, the foreign ministry called in Georgia's ambassador on Monday to protest about suggestions that "certain forces in Russia" were behind an assassination attempt against Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze on February 8.

The kidnappers, supporters of the late former president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, are demanding negotiations with Georgian leaders and the release of seven comrades arrested in connection with the attack on Mr Shevardnadze. — *Reuters, Dzikhskhari.*

### Whites whip black pupils

POLICE used stun grenades yesterday to restore calm in the small South African town of Vryburg after whip-wielding white parents assaulted black pupils at a school, a police spokesman said.

The white parents, carrying long whips known as jasmoks, had stopped a few dozen black children entering Vryburg High School, which until last year was reserved for whites only.

Black youths in a township near the northern town later stoned a police vehicle as it took black pupils home and set another patrol car alight, the spokesman said. — *Reuters, Cape Town.*

### Troops march on Tamil town

THOUSANDS of Sri Lankan troops yesterday began advancing under artillery and air cover towards a key northern town held by Tamil Tiger rebels, military officials said.

Mankulam is the last big town held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on a highway the military has been trying to capture during a 10-month campaign, the officials said.

Tamil suicide squads attacked a navy convoy off the northern Jaffna Peninsula and sank two ships carrying soldiers and sailors on Sunday. The defence ministry said that 61 soldiers and sailors had been rescued by late Monday. — *Reuters, Colombo.*

### Playpens for pigs fall flat

A LIBERAL MP seeking re-election to the Danish parliament has said the country's 11 million pigs — twice the human population — should be given toys to play with.

The opposition Liberal Party has its roots in Denmark's farming community but Mariann Fischer Boels's reform plans, which include rubber balls to keep pigs active, washing facilities, clean bedding and a ban on growth hormones, have failed to garner support from the party leadership. — *Reuters, Copenhagen.*

### Clearout at the palace

A WORKER at the South Korean presidential palace removes a picture of Kim Young-sam yesterday, the last day of his five-year term.

His successor, Kim Dae-jung, inherits a stricken economy when he takes over as president today. His blueprint emphasises free market principles to lead the country out of the crisis. — *Reuters, Seoul.*

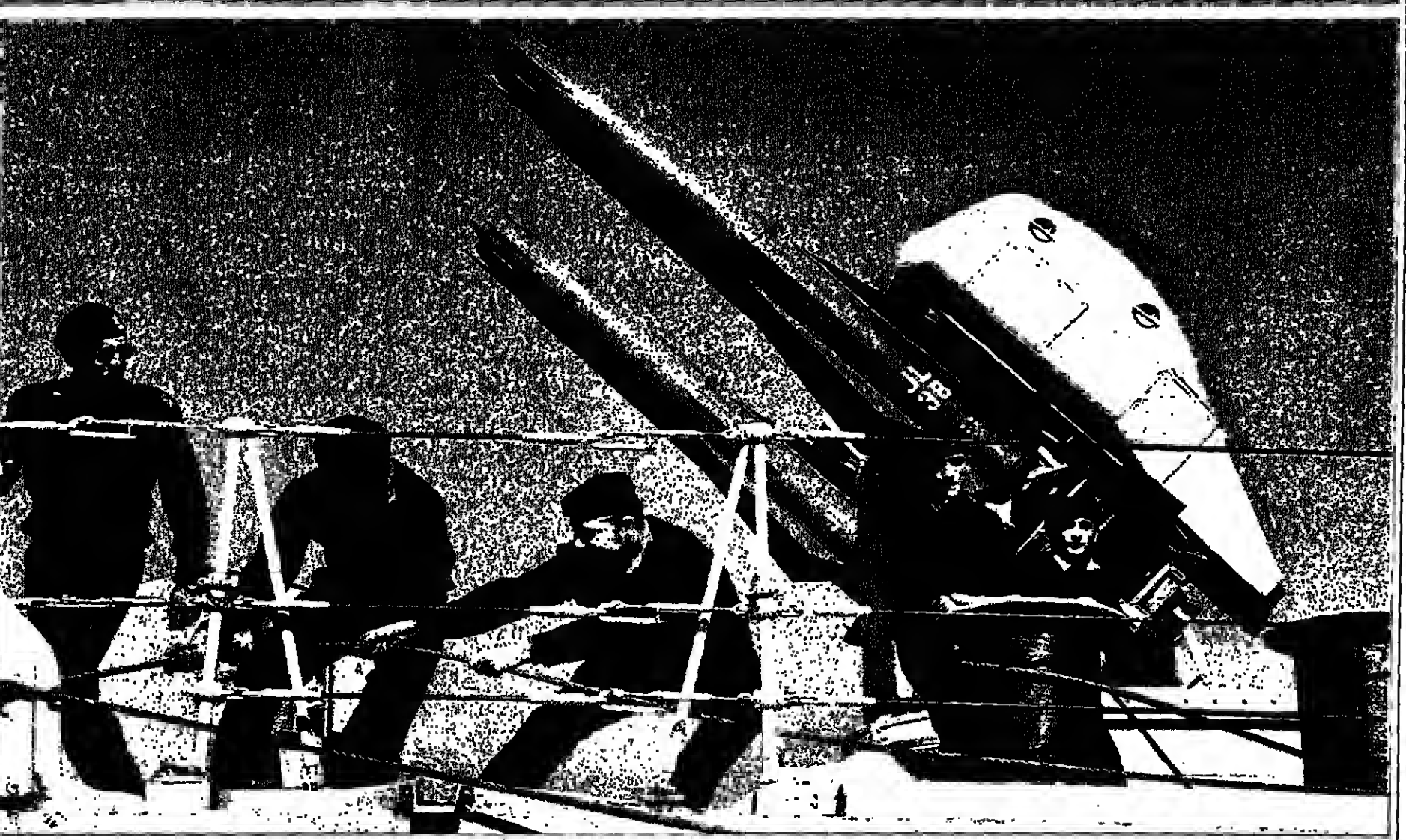


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**Manzoni once signed Umberto Eco's wrist with indelible ink, rendering him a living work of art. Eco didn't wash his arm for weeks. The ink won't off, but Manzoni's aura never did.**

Arts, G2 page 8



British sailors in front of Twin Sea Dart surface-to-air missiles dock the guided missile destroyer HMS Nottingham at Kuwait's Shuwaikh port

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHANIE MOGENSEN

## US forces may be camped around Gulf for good

David Fairhall, Defence Correspondent

**T**HE strategic price Saddam Hussein may pay for avoiding air strikes could be a vast American expeditionary force permanently camped around Iraq, alert for any sign that he is reneging on his promises to the United Nations or threatening his neighbours, defence sources said yesterday.

With United States troops still pouring into Kuwait, US officials warned that longer term deployments throughout

the Gulf will have to be reconsidered. Otherwise Washington risks having to rush forces halfway round the world every time the Iraqi leader chooses to ratchet up the tension.

"As part of the ongoing review of our Iraqi policy," said a senior official, "I expect we will look at means of enhancing our ability to project power into the region."

Britain faces a similar decision. But given its much smaller resources, defence sources in London hinted yesterday it would more likely make a virtue of necessity —

by only deploying forces in response to a fresh crisis.

Until it is clear whether President Saddam intends to keep his promises about unrestricted access for UN weapons inspectors, British forces will remain in the Gulf.

The Tornados squadrons based at Al-Jalibiyah in Kuwait (unlike the squadrons previously patrolling Iraq from Saudi Arabia and Turkey) is part of Britain's rapid deployment forces, always ready to deploy overseas at 48 hours notice. HMS Illustrious could return to the Mediterranean and still be only 10 days sailing from the Gulf.

At one point this year the

US had three aircraft carriers in the Gulf, though this was a strictly temporary overlap. Since the end of the 1991 Gulf war, when Washington signed a variety of defence co-operation agreements with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia, it has had some combat aircraft permanently in the region, one carrier usually on station, and ground troops almost continuously on training exercises. This presence may be further strengthened.

But even US assets are not unlimited. Earlier this month General John Tiltell, who

commands American forces on the Korean peninsula, is reported to have warned in a confidential memorandum that the diversion of naval and air force units to the Gulf, plus the deployment of Patriot air defence missiles to Kuwait, had weakened his ability to defend against a surprise North Korean attack. Even in Europe, one US commander complained he had not expected his Mediterranean forces to be depleted for "five or six weeks".

Leader comment and letters, page 9

## War fervour puts Blair in EU freezer

Martin Walker in Brussels finds ominous signs that Britain's partners are denying it a place at the international top table

**B**ITRAIN has agreed to push a much firmer European line against Israel, promising that there will be "no double standards" in the way Israel and Iraq are expected to obey United Nations resolutions.

The policy is part of its effort to fend off European criticism of its role in the military build-up against Iraq.

The resentment — Britain was accused by the Dutch foreign minister, Hans van Mierlo, of neglecting its duties as president of the EU Council in its determination to win favour with Washington — has been only partially eased by the resolution of the Iraq crisis.

This week's communiqué from the EU foreign ministers, which said that securing an agreement "was only possible because of the firm resolve shown by the United Nations and the international community", did not go nearly as far as Robin Cook wanted in endorsing Britain's tough stand.

"The fact is that most Europeans countries wanted a diplomatic solution, and it was France which acted as the real EU president in urging diplomacy and the Kofi Annan

mission, while Britain reverted to its familiar role as America's best friend," a senior EU diplomat said privately yesterday.

Despite the Foreign Secretary's best efforts to use the presidency to show Britain's new commitment to Europe, there are ominous signs that London is being excluded from the top table. President Jacques Chirac of France and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany met Polish leaders in Warsaw last week and promised their best efforts to speed Poland's EU membership, without Britain.

Britain's not-quite European status will be even more evident next month when President Chirac and Mr Kohl hold their first tripartite summit with Russia, without Tony Blair.

British officials insist that their six-month stint in the presidency is going well, attracting praise from other EU members, and laying a firm foundation for the policy of "putting Britain at the heart of Europe".

In reality, on the issues where progress is measurable, the presidency has been marked by disappointment, both at the endless delays in lifting the ban on British beef and on the far more serious long-term

issue of Britain's role in economic policy-making once the euro is launched.

In the past few days some of the Chancellor, Gordon Brown's darkest fears about the new Euro-X group, of which Britain is not a member, have started to come true.

France proposed last week that Austria should be allowed to start chairing the first meetings of the

'France acted as EU president while Britain reverted to its role as America's best friend'

Euro-X group, months before Britain's presidency runs out in July.

Britain will be unavoidably embarrassed by the separate meetings of the Euro-X group once monetary union is launched at the summit on May 2-3. As a euro-member and next holder of the presidency, Austria says it is willing to chair the first Euro-X group meetings thereafter. But the French finance minister, Dominique

Strass-Kahn, said last week: "It may even be before that."

The problem for Britain is more than symbolic. The fact that Euro-X is already developing its own working arrangements is giving political momentum to the notion in Paris, Bonn and Washington that the G7 summits should be replaced by a G3 — the US, Japan and the Euro bloc. Britain's exclusion could humiliate Mr Blair's government.

It remains to be seen how far Britain will lean on Israel to get the Middle East peace process back on track.

There was a series of demands at the foreign ministers' meeting for "more determined language to be addressed to those blocking the peace process".

Mr Cook is sympathetic, but wants to avoid the impression that Britain is being forced to choose between its American allies and its European partners, particularly when EMU makes exclusion from Europe's inner circle so costly.

But the contrast between Mr Blair's passionately pro-Clinton summit in Washington and his absence from next month's Franco-German-Russian summit underlines Mr Van Mierlo's warning that Britain "has big problems in meeting its obligations as an EU member".

## Russia cashes in on peace

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

**T**HE Russian government, presenting Kofi Annan's agreement with Iraq as a victory for Kremlin diplomacy, began yesterday to cash in on its higher diplomatic profile in the Middle East.

The focus of interest for the Russian nuclear energy and oil industries is the business opportunities the deal presents. With an end to UN sanctions on Iraq now being considered, the estimated \$10 billion worth of contracts that Russian companies have signed to develop Saddam's dilapidated oil fields are more than pipe dreams.

"Many things are now promised to Russia, including invitations to begin oil exploration, and paying off Soviet-era debts worth \$8-12 billion," said Sergei Kazayonov, of Moscow's Institute of National Security and Strategic Studies.

Russian oil companies have bought most of the oil Iraq has been permitted to export under its "oil for food" deal and they stand to benefit most from the UN decision to raise Saddam's permitted oil exports from \$2 billion (\$1.3 billion) to \$5.2 billion (\$2.2 billion).

This new resolution has made available additional op-

portunities for broadening Russian companies' participation in purchasing Iraqi oil, where they are already playing a leading role, and in supplying humanitarian aid to Iraq," said foreign ministry spokesman Gennady Tarasov.

Russia's opposition to military action against Iraq is paying other dividends. Further Russian involvement in Iran's nuclear power sector will be on the agenda at talks in Moscow today between Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, and Russia's Yevgeny Primakov.

Last Saturday, nuclear energy minister Viktor Mikhailov confirmed Russia's \$780 million contract to build a 1,000MW light-water reactor at Bushehr on Iran's Persian Gulf coast, despite US and Israeli fears that Iran could use the power station as cover for a nuclear missile project.

In Syria, too, Russia's nuclear energy ministry is set to provide equipment and expertise in a deal announced last Sunday.

Russia's enhanced Middle East profile may be seen as a vindication of Mr Primakov's diplomacy. Though presented in US media as a Saddam stooge, it was Mr Primakov, at Kofi Annan's request, who persuaded Saddam to back down from insisting on a time limit to inspections of his "presidential sites".

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we can

Traynor

Battle fo  
crimes c

Moscow mayor  
dog-killer claims

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

Yuri Luzhkov, Moscow's mayor who is tipped to succeed Boris Yeltsin as president, has gone to court to refute accusations from Brigitte Bardot that he ordered the extermination of the city's burgeoning cat population.

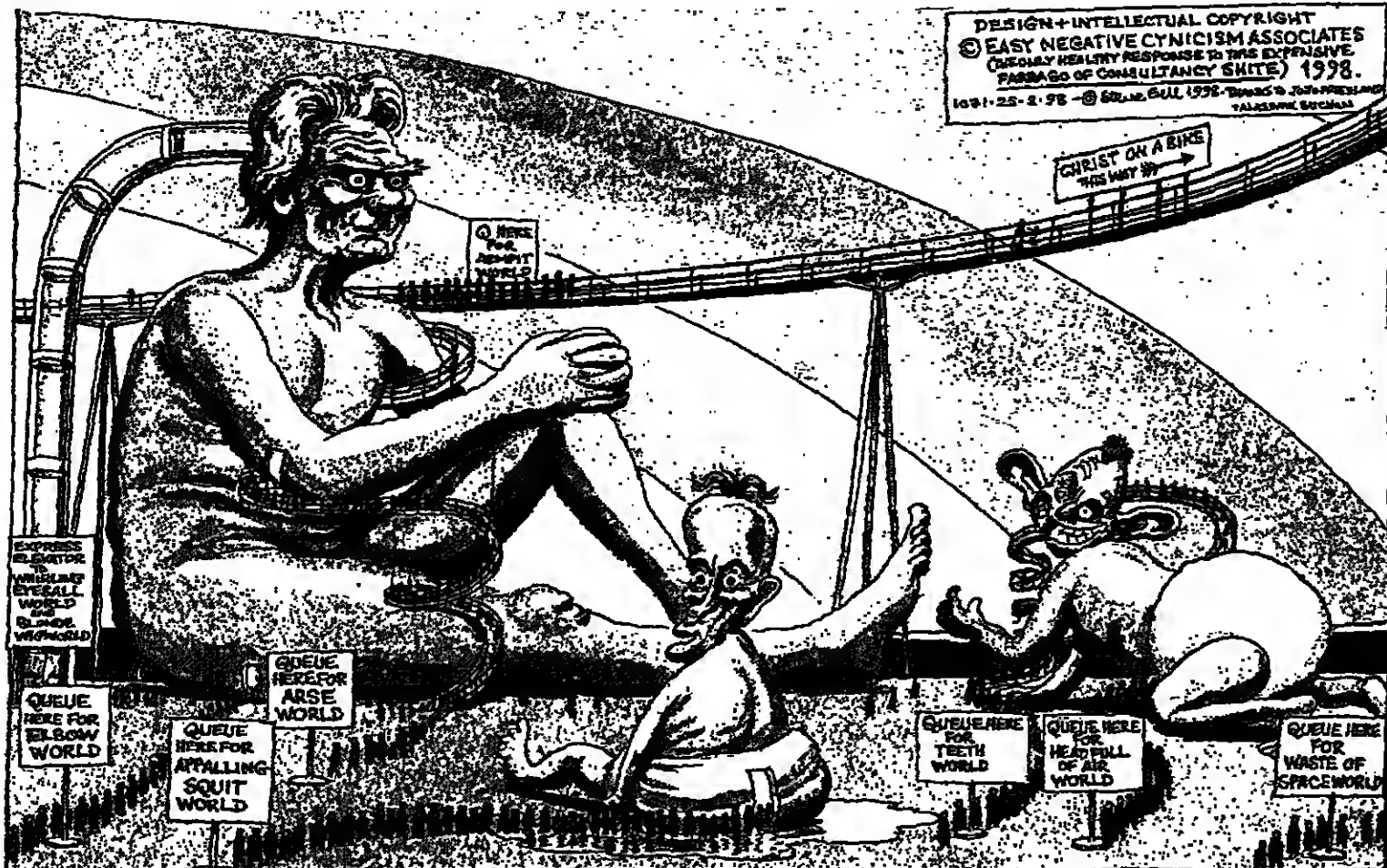






## Matthew Norman

**M**OVING smoothly between religions, to news from Israel of an important rabbinical judgment. Bizarre magazine reports that Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a former chief rabbi to Egypt, has ruled that it is officially acceptable to pick your nose on the Sabbath.



## Don't laugh: Mandy's Dome could be a big hit with the punters

**Jonathan  
Freedland**

A black and white portrait of Jonathan Freedland, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing dark sunglasses. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

But such an ideal is not out of reach, indeed, one of the 12 Millennium zones — "uk@now" — will be dedicated to a discussion of Britishness and what the word might mean. Perhaps this will yield the outlines of an answer — an idea which could unite not just the disparate elements under the Dome, but the country itself. Now that would be a cause for celebration.

## Hague's identity crisis

**WILLIAM HAGUE** is a man who has been known since childhood as a character from Pinocchio. Last night's speech at the Centre for Policy Studies, like his restructuring of party organisation, is an attempt to construct a new identity for Conservatism. The new party is now being born, but it has had a hard memory. It was broken up and swept away by changes in society, many of them magnified and accelerated by the policies of Tory governments, that found expression in last year's general election and in the public reaction to the death of the Princess of Wales.

Hague's task will not be easy. Like Pinocchio he became cast of Six Characters. In Search Of An Author, who find they have somehow mislaid the identities they once had and spend their time looking vainly for new ones, Hague is unlikely to find a convincing answer to the only question that really matters: what is there to believe in? What is some consolation in

The Tory dilemma is stark. William Hague has staked his future on reconstructing the Conservatives as a thoroughly modern party. But he has also heard nothing more of that liberal social attitudes that Michael Portillo signalled at the Tory party conference. But making hostility to Europe the *raison d'être* of New Toryism is hugely risky. The electorate does not share the Tory's view of Europe. Hague's constituencies and shadow cabinet. Presumably John Redwood made his embarrassing hostile remarks about Chancellor Kohl in the belief that he was echoing the sentiments of the silent majority. But most British voters are not nationalists and they have no desire to see the United Kingdom as a dominant force in the affairs of Europe.

have been shaped and dominated for nearly 20 years by Thatcherite Conservatism. In opposition Blair was able to assemble a far-flung coalition held together by the project of unseating the Tories. Now that the Tories have all but disappeared as a political force, what does Labour stand

has crafted may begin to fragment.

A centre-left coalition of the kind that Blair seems set on will be durable only if it stands for something more than an economic orthodoxy which it shares with the Tories. Aside from constitutional and perhaps electoral reform, there are as yet few

Like the Tories, Labour gives the impression of being adrift because it has shed its old identity and failed to find a new one. So long as it remains too timid to follow the lead given by the voters it will look in vain.

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John Gray is Professor of European thought at the LSE

# A victory for children

**Polly  
Toynbee**



Why did Labour ever consider those cuts? It wasn't a welfare reform, but a fall-out from the election campaign. The row blew up when the Chancellor kept his pledge to keep strictly within Tory spending plans: the hardest test of that resolve was sticking to Peter Lilley's lone-parent cuts. Lilley set a mischievously clever trap, which Gordon Brown feared falling into.

Harman deserves to be allowed to announce the restored lone parent cuts in a Commons debate on women on Friday, but it may wait until hudget day. Either way, it's good news and not just for lone parents. It means the Government is brave enough to change its mind and do the right thing in the face of crowing from its critics. Now the issue will die and be forgotten, whereas had they ploughed on for the sake of

## Single parents on income support will get the money restored

What's more, she now has dramatic new figures showing that for the first time this decade the number of single parents on benefit is falling — as she predicted following her letter to Lilley. Part of the credit goes to her lone-parents initiative, with a campaign showing them how much better off they can be in work. The mood is already changing: restoring the lone parent cuts will encourage that trend. (But firing Harman would be rat-like injustice.)



**His strategy shows how the political agenda has been taken over by Blair**

has crafted may begin to fragment.

A centre-left coalition of the kind that Blair seems set on will be durable only if it stands for something more than an economic orthodoxy which it shares with the Tories. Aside from constitutional and perhaps electoral reform, there are as yet few

to conservative attitudes. It can only be a matter of time before decriminalising cannabis is advocated by a rightwing tabloid. Must we wait for that to happen before the Government dares to show that it shares the values of the

Like the Tories, Labour gives the impression of being adrift because it has shed an old identity and failed to find a new one. So long as it remains too timid to follow the lead given by the voters it will look in vain.

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John Gray is Professor of European thought at the LSE



A black and white illustration showing a woman and a child reaching up towards a star on a tree. The woman is on the left, wearing a dress and reaching with her right arm. The child is on the right, also reaching up. A star is visible on a branch of the tree.



**Guar**

**The show  
on the road**

letters to the

Sadda

**Mark Steel**

**"F**IGHT SAYS FIGHT  
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Fred Evans  
Top of  
the  
class  
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Wednesday February 25 1998

Latest adventure at bookstore, page 12

Number crunchers under the thumb, page 12

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer  
Telephone: 0171-239-9610  
Fax: 0171-833-4456

# FinanceGuardian

## NatWest profits on slide

Julia Finch

**T**HE full extent of the troubles within NatWest emerged yesterday as the bank revealed an annual profit of £1.1 billion, down from £1.2 billion last year, while analysts had expected up to £1.4 billion.

It was NatWest's worst performance since 1993, when the bank was still battered by the effects of the recession. Chief executive Derek Wan-

less said it had been "a very tough year", and chairman Lord Alexander confessed the results were "poor". But one institutional shareholder said the time had come for a change of face in the source close to the boardroom. Lord Alexander and Mr Wanless, which became frosty last year, was still strained.

Last week NatWest appointed three new non-executive directors, including Lord Alexander, who is expected to take over as chairman in 1999. The institutional shareholder, who asked not to be named, said: "If they are go-

ing to change the chairman, they should do it soon. What is the point of waiting another year?" Any new chairman is likely to appoint his own chief executive. The NatWest insider said there were two candidates on the board - Paul Myers, who heads NatWest's Gartmore Fund Management business, and Martin Gray, director of UK banking. Mr Gray's division produced a 48 per cent increase in profits last year to £92 million.

The shareholder added: "It is an unhappy board... The chairman and chief executive have tried to patch up their differences, but they are still very remote. All in all it is a

pretty miserable boardroom at the moment. The only way forward is new management or a takeover". Yesterday Mr Wanless, who last year held merger talks with Prudential and Abbey National and received another approach from Barclay's chief executive, Martin Taylor, said he believed there would be further consolidation in financial services, but not among the big banks, as the competition authorities would block any such deals.

The bulk of the damage to NatWest was inflicted by the bank's ill-starred investment banking venture, NatWest Markets, which is now being dismantled and sold off.

During its first six months, NatWest Markets lost £34 million. But full-year losses rocketed to £706 million, including a £252 million charge for closing the equities business and a £77 million provision to cover the losses of a sole derivatives trader. In 1998, NatWest Markets contributed £100 million to profits.

Its performance left the bank's return on equity at only 10.8 per cent, compared to 16.4 per cent a year earlier. Without NatWest Markets, the group's 1997 return on equity would have been more than 20 per cent.

There were setbacks in other parts of the group. NatWest is making a provision of £80 million to cover possible defaults on £1.5 billion of loans made to companies in the troubled economies of Thailand, Korea and Indonesia.

Profits at its Courts subsidiary, which provides accounts for the very wealthy, slumped from £106 million to £29 million after bad debt provisions leaped from \$9 million to \$76 million.

There was one encouraging piece of news for shareholders - the bank has spare cash and, because it believes prices are too high to justify an acquisition, intends to return some to shareholders later this year, probably in the form of a share buyback.

### Notebook

## Cost of failing to swallow tablets



Alex Brummer

**T**HE aborted Glaxo Wellcome/SmithKline Beecham merger has left a bitter aftertaste - and not just on the stock market where investors in both companies have been punished because of the perceived hubris of the executive leadership.

The takeover authorities encourage the parties to the maximum amount of information for investors as soon as is practicable. But this is not an excuse for cavalierly announcing merger terms and management line-up without recognising the problems: which both Sir Richard Sykes and Jan Leschly of SmithKline have done.

Of the two chief executives, Mr Leschly would appear to come out worse. He has twice put his shares in play, allowed the shares to soar on the back of it, and been forced into a humiliating retreat.

There are some murmurings about this among institutional shareholders, but probably not enough to dislodge a chief executive who, in terms of results, actually delivered a better performance than Glaxo Wellcome in 1997. The latter is still struggling to fill the huge hole created by the end of the Zantac patent.

Much of the bitterness emerging over why the merger failed has come from the SmithKline Beecham camp, with the underlying plot being the impossibility of two super-egos such as Sir Richard and Jan Leschly being able to work together. The failure has also raised questions as to whether it is sensible for Sir Richard to steer Glaxo any longer, without the watchful eye of a powerful independent chairman.

The assumption is that SmithKline, because it is only just in the top 10 ethical drug companies, needs a merger more than Glaxo Wellcome. SKB has made enormous strides in the area of identification technology, identifying hundreds of pharmaceutical development targets for the next century. But it is an expensive business and the resources inside Glaxo Wellcome, would have made all that more possible.

There is a sneaking suspicion that it may still happen. Glaxo Wellcome's silence on reasons for failure suggests that Sir Richard and his advisers might be plotting a return match. A hostile bid on the scale envisaged would be a novelty. But that also was the case when Glaxo moved on Wellcome.

new potential chairman in the shape of Lord Blyth, one might have thought all the bad news was out. Not a bit of it. An unusually contrite statement from chief executive Derek Wanless, who invoked the word "awful" to describe the performance of NatWest Markets, managed to conjure up fresh horrors.

The problems at NatWest Markets, now rebranded Greenwiche, turned out to be £706 million, which is above the £530 million which the bank disclosed to shareholders as recently as December. The new figure has been inflated by the original £77 million loss in interest rate options, plus goodwill write-offs for Hamro Magan and South-East Asia.

But the problems were not confined to investment banking. At Courts, the most up-market name in the NatWest group, a problem with some mysterious clients in New York brought profits down 72 per cent and a slash and burn retreat from New York and Beverly Hills. As with other UK banks, NatWest has taken an Asian hit - of a modest £80 million.

Clearly, there has been an attempt by the NatWest board to classify 1997 as a year of transition and to take as much of the risk into the results as possible. This includes initial costs for the millennium bug. And there will no doubt be some relief among shareholders, who have seen value drain away over the past years, that after the adventures, Wanless now intends to focus the business on financial services in the UK and Ireland.

Part of this focus will be making the best use of NatWest's technological base, particularly in the areas of smart cards, PCs and interactive banking. However, if that is the case, the board might be better advised to encourage Lord Alexander to go now, allowing Lord Blyth - with masses of retail expertise - to direct the new charge. He might also be better equipped to forge a merger, perhaps with Abbey National.

**Greenspan's gold**  
**T**HE storm clouds which have been identified in the UK banks profits season, are now being seen by no less a figure than Alan Greenspan in the Federal Reserve. On the day that JP Morgan moved to ratchet down its cost structure with a 5 per cent cut in its workforce, Mr Greenspan pointed out that bank credits advanced in the late stages of the business cycle often turn out to be bad loans which have to be written off at a later date.

Similarly, shares bought late in the economic cycle will eventually be looked at with "some regret by investors". This was a warning that Mr Greenspan has referred to in the past. It reflects the sensible view that the trade cycle has not been over yet, and, however liquid markets may be, investing in shares - when the fundamentals are wrong - is fool's gold.

### Bank futures

**B**Y NOW after a year of setbacks and drama at NatWest, including the reinforcement of the board with the appointment of a

### News in brief

#### JP Morgan to shed 500 staff

American banking company JP Morgan yesterday announced plans to shed 5 per cent of its staff, raising speculation that it is ripe for a takeover. Morgan will shed more than 500 employees, including 140 of its 5,800-strong European staff. A memo circulated by chairman Douglas Warner said the move arose from expenses incurred in transforming Morgan from a commercial to an investment bank. Goldman Sachs, Chase Manhattan, Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank have been tipped as bid candidates.

#### Rolls looks abroad

Rolls-Royce urged the Government yesterday to lift the limit on foreign shareholdings in the aeroengine maker as it claimed to have taken more

than a third of world orders for civil aircraft power plants in 1997. John Rose, chief executive, said in a letter to shareholders that Rolls-Royce would welcome a decision to raise the current 25.5 per cent limit on foreign ownership amid reports ministers are planning to raise it to just under 50 per cent. He said his firm had won about 80 per cent of new orders in the US for its twin-engine aircraft and 10 per cent of the Asian market.

#### Brown hits back

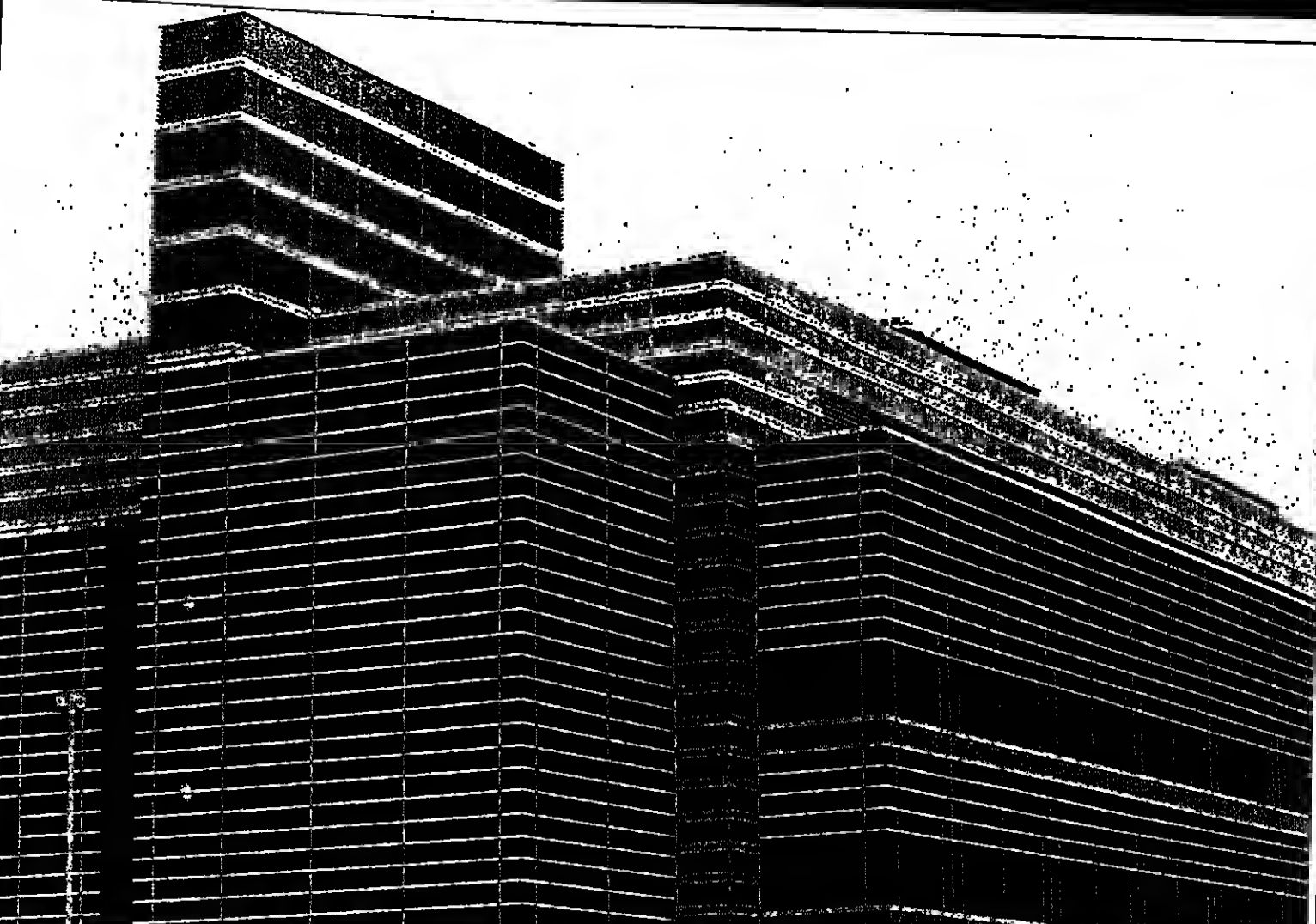
The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, yesterday denied that the Government had pushed membership of the euro over the horizon of the next election for fear of encountering the wrath of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, writes Mark Atkinson. In evidence to the Commons Treasury committee on EMU, Mr Brown said there were sound economic reasons for postponing a decision on EMU entry.

#### TOURIST RATES - BANK BELLS

Australia 2.408	Germany 2.876	Malaysia 6.128	Singapore 2.84
Austria 20.23	Greece 457.71	Malta 0.63	South Africa 7.00
Belgium 56.40	Hong Kong 12.39	Netherlands 2.315	Spain 162.55
Canada 2.287	India 84.42	New Zealand 2.78	Sweden 12.54
Cyprus 0.9494	Ireland 1.1598	Norway 2.456	Switzerland 2.32
Denmark 11.03	Israel 5.91	Portugal 204.56	Turkey 324.84
Finland 8.82	Italy 2.982	Saudi Arabia 6.07	USA 1.6102
France 9.63			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding rupee, shekel and malawi).

### Chemical reaction



Missed target... SmithKline Beecham's research establishment in Harlow, Essex

PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

## Drugs industry on attack alert

Collapse of takeover talks may result in mood turning hostile, says Roger Cowe

**P**ROSPECTS of Glaxo Wellcome mounting a hostile bid for rival drugs group SmithKline Beecham increased yesterday after the surprise collapse of their planned £120 billion merger.

This was seen in the City as one potential outcome of the failed deal but other possibilities include an assault on another drugs company, Zeneca, or a search by both thwarted partners for other takeover candidates.

Financial institutions will be demanding justifications from the leaders of both companies for their actions in frustrating the deal and losing hundreds of millions of pounds in merger benefits. The failure is particularly embarrassing for SmithKline Beecham, which entered talks with Glaxo after abandoning a planned deal with the US company American Home Products.

Shareholders were left nursing huge losses after

more than £13 billion was wiped from the two companies' stock market values in response to news that the merger had fallen through. One institutional investor complained that the two companies' boards should not have allowed personality clashes to prevent the deal going ahead.

"The merger obviously would have contributed to shareholder value. Management has a duty to extract value and pursue it to the bitter end," he said. Another commented: "The deal seemed to have a lot of sense. It's a shame that cultural issues or management egos got in the way."

SmithKline announced late on Monday night, after a lengthy board meeting, that it could not go ahead with the merger, which would have created one of the world's largest companies.

The deal was unveiled at the end of January, when Glaxo stepped in to the gap

### The merger effect



left by the failure of SmithKline's merger with American Home Products. In its statement calling off the finger directly at Glaxo, saying the company's conduct of the negotiations "has inevitably strained relations between the two companies".

SmithKline said its intended partner declared on Friday that it was not prepared to go ahead on the basis originally agreed. Despite its best efforts, including talks

over the weekend between the groups' two senior non-executives, Sir Peter Williams and Sir Roger Burn, it was clear that "insurmountable differences" had arisen.

Neither side would expand on the differences, but the personalities of Sir Richard Sykes and Jan Leschly, the two leading executives, were seen as crucial to the breakdown.

One observer said SmithKline had become frustrated at Glaxo's stream of demands

to change items in the outline agreement. "It was a gradual chipping away which meant they were trying to do a different deal," he said. "It was a case of 'if you can't see how it's going to work, you may as well get divorced before you're married'."

Glaxo's leaders are believed to have come under pressure from managers below board level. A feeling grew among these executives that the deal was going to give their counterparts in the smaller SmithKline too much say in the merged group.

Analysts were speculating yesterday that both companies could attempt to fend off criticism by engineering other corporate deals.

Stephen Putnam of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson said: "Both of them could be dusting off their files on Zeneca. But James Culverwell of Merrill Lynch dismissed talk of any immediate takeover move. 'Both companies are very strong. Neither was a distressed seller,' he said."

Fund managers last night called on both companies to explain why the deal collapsed.

## Cases of the jilters

Dan Atkinson

**S**TEP forward Telecom & Wireless, super-markets group Asda-Way and the BarWest Banking Group. All differently shaped groupings struggling under a common handicap. They do not exist.

These are the huge companies that never were, the "world-class players" that would fly the flag, take on the Americans and Japanese, and put Britain back where it belongs.

Now this rapidly growing club has welcomed its newest member: Glaxo SmithKline, the multi-billion-pound marriage that was called off on Monday night. The newcomer will spot one friendly face in the clubroom, that of SmithKline Beecham-American Home Products, the transatlantic drugs alliance which was terminated by SKB this year in favour of the Glaxo "deal".

This has become something of a habit in the corporate Britain of the 1990s. British Telecom has been through two duft engagements, first to follow Brit Cable & Wireless, and then with America's MCI group, which ungratefully took off with a flash-barry outfit called WorldCom, all for a measly \$37 billion. Banks have proved even more promiscuous. They had BarWest proved a non-starter than Barclays was snuffing around Standard Chartered. Meanwhile, NatWest has been linked with insurance Prudential and the Abbey National.

Foreigners are not averse to a spot of merger interitus. Volvo and Renault were to have snuggled up but didn't, and Commerzbank has been mentioned in the same breath as a string of possible partners. But the not-quite-merger is becoming a British speciality.

The law of averages suggests some of these deals ought to have gone through. And some have. But there are worse things in life than embarrassment.

## Mixture that was bound to explode

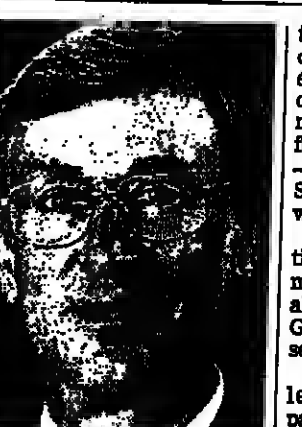
Roger Cowe

**I**T IS easy to see why Sir Richard Sykes and Jan Leschly could not agree on how to run their merged empires. The chiefs of the two drugs groups might be described euphemistically as "powerful personalities" - demanding leaders who make unlikely co-workers.

He realised he was unlikely to get higher than number 10 in the world rankings, which he achieved in 1985. He is determined to be number one in his chosen field and shot to the top when he moved to the drugs industry. Despite a setback when he lost out in a previous drugs merger, between Bristol Myers and Squibb in 1989, Mr Leschly bounced back.

He has been chief executive of SmithKline since 1994 and has pursued growth with a drive that prompted one rival to describe him as a "megalo-maniac".

Mr Leschly expects hard work from colleagues but is seen as impatient with challenges to his views. These characteristics are shared by Sir Richard Sykes, the research scientist whose



Head to head... Jan Leschly, left, and Sir Richard Sykes

the top of the pharmaceutical league. Both traits were evidenced in the hostile takeover of Wellcome, which might have served as a model for the deal with SmithKline - but demonstrated to SmithKline executives what would lie in store for them.

Sir Richard has a reputation as a boss who is determined to get his way. This abrasiveness has maintained Glaxo's tradition of losing senior executives.



Last October, Sean Lance left abruptly after being passed over for the job of chief executive, despite having been earmarked for the post five months previously. Instead, Robert Ingram, who had headed the US business for a year, was given the job. In a precursor of yesterday's statement, the departure was put down to a clash of styles.

Sir Richard has moved from chief executive to executive chairman. This goes against the trend of large companies being chaired by strong non-executive directors, to keep in check powerful boardroom personalities.



## Wages climb ahead of pay laws

Charlotte Denny and Mark Atkinson

**L**ABOUR'S plan for a national minimum wage is boosting pay packets even before it is introduced, according to new research due to be published today.

Incomes Data Services — which was commissioned by the Low Pay Commission — says many companies are increasing wages now to avoid having to make a big adjustment in April 1999, when the pay floor is due to be introduced.

Firms which have recently increased their basic salaries include McDonald's, which has upped its basic rate by 12 per cent to £3.60 an hour for staff outside London and £4 for those in the capital.

Union pressure and recruitment difficulties have contributed to pushing up wages, says IDS. Public sector unions have secured deals establishing £4 as the minimum hourly rate for their members.

The report says there is no sign that better paid workers are demanding increases to maintain differentials, a common objection by employers to the minimum wage. There was also not much evidence of job losses from higher pay, another employer objection.

Trade minister Ian McCartney said the report refuted "doom-mongers" who predicted that firms would lay off workers rather than pay the national minimum wage.

The Low Pay Commission have until May to recommend a level to the Government for the minimum wage.



McDonald's staff, including those at this restaurant in Romford, Essex, have seen their wages rise. PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD SMITH

## Coal industry unites in market lobby

Producers and unions launch campaign to halt pit closures

David Gow  
Industrial Editor

**C**OAL producers, mining unions and MPs yesterday joined forces to press the Government to stop up to eight pit closures and the loss of thousands of jobs from June by guaranteeing coal a minimum 30 per cent share of the electricity generating market.

Gas reserves could be exhausted and Britain could become a net importer soon

after the turn of the century. Professor Steve Fothergill, director of the Coalfield Communities Campaign, said: "We're not asking for support for sentimental reasons nor simply to protect jobs, but because British coal can deliver energy that is affordable, reliable, clean and secure."

Prof Fothergill said that the industry faced a shortfall of between 10 and 14 million tonnes a year from the end of June, when existing contracts with generators, extended late last year for three

months after government intervention, ran out.

"That would mean the pretty immediate closure of six or eight large collieries. If the trend towards gas continued, that would lead to another round of closures in 2000, or shortly afterwards."

"Left to itself, the free market is endangering the future of the coal industry; it could eliminate it. Once it's gone, there's no turning back. It's gone for ever," he told a Westminster meeting.

In a plan titled A Market For Coal, the campaign argues that the guaranteed minimum market for coal would be a long-term framework, for up to 20 years,

that would justify investing in new coal reserves.

Richard Budge, chief executive of Britain's biggest coal producer, KJB Mining, told the meeting that the Government's energy review could take two years but ministers should act within two months — before current contracts run out. "We need the government to give us a lead."

He added: "We could then be producing more coal from April and have no further pit closures. We have reduced costs by 10 per cent because of the efforts of the workforce in the last three years, and if we could be guaranteed extra coal-burn over the next five, there would be no subsidy

required, and the industry would be in a much more competitive position."

But John Redwood, the shadow trade and industry secretary, said the Government's deal to extend existing contracts with generators by three months simply encouraged buying rather than burning coal. "It means the collapse is going to be even bigger this summer."

## Birth of new books chain

Julia Finch

**A** NEW books and records retail group will be created today when WH Smith announces the sale of its Waterstone's book chain to a newly-created company that will also include HMV's bookshops and HMV record outlets.

The new company is backed by the United States venture capital group Advent and record giant EMI — which owns Dillons and HMV. Entrepreneurs Tim Waterstone, who founded the eponymous book chain before selling out to WH Smith in 1989, is expected to be named executive chairman of the new group and together with other senior managers is understood to be investing more than £5 million in the new venture.

The new chain will also include the Daisy & Tom children's books and toys stores which belong to Mr Waterstone.

WH Smith is expected to receive some £300 million for the Waterstone's chain, which made a £10 million profit in the past six months.

The sale was prompted by an audacious takeover bid for the whole of WH Smith proposed by Mr Waterstone last October. The ailing high

street giant saw off the bid before it was officially tabled but Mr Waterstone had focused minds on a new strategy at Smith's and the group, under new chief executive Richard Handover, has since decided to concentrate its efforts on its core WH Smith chain.

It has already disposed of its US record chain, The Wall, for £28 million and had drawn up plans to float Waterstone's as a separate company.

Mr Waterstone and his partners approached WH Smith before Christmas with a new plan to take over just the books chain and last night the finishing touches to the deal were being made.

There appeared to be still some debate over Mr Waterstone's role. One source close to the negotiations said he would be a "non-executive part-timer" while another said he would be working "five days a week" at the new company.

The long-term plan is for the new retail chain, which will have some 630 book and record outlets, to be floated on the stock exchange. It will be one of the highest music, books, videos and computer game retailers in Europe.

Waterstone's has some 120 outlets, mainly in the UK and Ireland, while Dillons has nearly 80 UK outlets. HMV

has 330 stores in eight countries. There are currently two Daisy & Tom stores, in London and Manchester, although Mr Waterstone has ambitious plans for several more superstore-sized outlets in leading cities.

The entrepreneur has a reputation as a talented retailer and ideas man, but he does not have a record of running profitable ventures. But at the new company he will be flanked by two joint chief executives, Alan Giles who will run the books division and Stuart McAllister, who will head the records business.

WH Smith is now expected to start negotiations to sell its 75 per cent of the Virgin/Our Price record chain. The remaining 25 per cent belongs to Richard Branson's Virgin Group and last summer Mr Branson offered £135 million to take full control. The Virgin group has first option on any sale.

The books and records market has been facing substantial change since the ending of the net book agreement, which prevented retailers from discounting books, three years ago. Since then there has been a surge of sales through supermarkets and bookshops have been forced to target serious bookbuyers to offset discounting on best sellers.

## Labour's statistical U-turn

Charlotte Denny

**T**HE Government yesterday backed away from its manifesto commitment to an independent statistical service in the face of resistance from civil servants to greater parliamentary scrutiny.

Before the election, Labour promised to allow public concern that statisticians' work is subject to political interference. The party repeatedly claimed that jobs figures were "fiddled" to lower the unemployment total.

Full independence would make the Office for National Statistics (ONS) accountable to Parliament rather than the Treasury. Yesterday, however, Helen Liddell, the junior Treasury minister, unveiled a green paper which downgraded full independence to just one of four options for the

future of the service. Sources claim that ministers such as Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, who were strong supporters of a fully independent service in opposition have done a U-turn now that they are in power.

"The manifesto line has proved hard to implement once ministers realised the penalty of being in control of their own statistics," said Simon Briscoe of Nikko Bank, a member of the ONS's statistics users group.

When the green paper was first circulated in Whitehall, sources say Downing Street sent out a letter arguing that there was no need to canvass different options and that the proposal to make the ONS statistically independent should be published as a white paper.

Objections from departments which are reluctant to lose control over official sta-

tics could result in full independence falling off the agenda, however, when the consultations on what is now the green paper are considered.

Outlining the difficulties, Ms Liddell said making the ONS statistically independent would be the most expensive option, while the green paper warns that it would take up scarce parliamentary time.

Mr Briscoe said none of the other three options advanced could be described as making the ONS into an independent statistical service. The options are: strengthening existing arrangements by delegating more responsibility away from ministers to the ONS; establishing a governing body with an independent chair and setting up an independent statistical commission to check up on the ONS.

## Fixed loans may foil the Old Lady

Mark Miller

**I**NCREASING numbers of home-buyers are switching to fixed-rate mortgages in a move which could eventually affect the way in which the Bank of England handles monetary policy.

Traditionally house-buying in Britain has been financed by variable-rate mortgages, heavily influenced by the short-term interest rates set by the Bank of England.

But with more home-buyers taking advantage of lower long-term interest rates by locking into fixed-rate mortgages the economic impact of short-term rate changes could be blunted.

"Borrowers are decoupling themselves from general interest rates, which is why the five interest-rate hikes imposed [since last May] ... have had only modest effect," Joe Dwyer, chairman of Britain's biggest housebuilder, Wimpey, said yesterday.

Big lenders reckon between 50 and 70 per cent of new loans over the last six months are fixed for five years, says Mr Dwyer.

Yesterday some lenders were coy about the figures, but the Halifax, Britain's big-

gest mortgage provider, said that about 60 per cent of new loans were fixed, although it could not give a breakdown of the periods for which they were fixed.

"If more people are taking out fixed-rate mortgages, then monetary policy is going to be blunter," according to David Coleman, an economist at CIBC Wood Gundy.

Although changes in short-term rates would affect the cost of credit-card and other borrowings they would have much less effect on home-buyers whose mortgage rate was fixed for several years in advance, he noted.

If the trend towards fixed-rate mortgages continues, it is likely to bring the financing of the housing market in the UK more closely into line with other parts of the European Union.

Almost 60 per cent of mortgage-lending in the UK is made via short-term variable rate loans, compared to only about 5 per cent in France and Germany, according to recent figures from Oxford Economic Forecasts.

Greater use of fixed-rate deals could mean fewer complications for the housing market if Britain were to sign up for the single currency.

Tony May

**S**AFEWAY, the UK's fourth largest supermarket group, yesterday issued its second profit warning in three months.

Colin Smith, the group's chief executive, slipped further in the City's good books — and more than £110 million was wiped off the stock market value of the company — after he warned that profits for the year were likely to fall by \$55 million to \$375 million as sales struggled to regain lost momentum.

Analysts warned that profits were unlikely to improve much this year because Safeway is increasing sales at the expense of profit margins. The group abandoned merger talks with ASDA in September and, though the trading news was bad, analysts thought the share price was unlikely to fall too much further because bid speculation would continue.

It is difficult to see who would be bold enough to mount a bid while the trading picture is so clouded. A Safeway spokesman denied that investors had called for Mr Smith's head, and said the group had not received

any bid approach. Mr Smith said the group had resolved the problems that formed the basis for the last profit warning in November, when Safeway could not get stock on to the shelves ahead of the important Christmas season.

The group was now on track to meet the targets on sales and savings it set in November but would need to invest an extra £40 million in the coming year to improve product availability and supply chains.

Safeway's share of the £33 billion food retail market rose 0.3 per cent in 1997, compared with rises of 1.5 per cent by Tesco and Sainsbury's and ASDA's 1 per cent increase. Smaller stores are continuing to lose out to the larger chains.

Competition will increase with the merger of Somerfield and Kwik Save, who said on Monday that they aim to be the number one player in the high street when they announced plans for a merger to create the country's fifth largest grocery chain.

Safeway has been hurt by the revival in the fortunes of Sainsbury's and is relying on improved service and technological innovation to keep customer loyalty and sales.

However, the consortium has been unable to persuade a UK company to join it, though talks are said to be continuing with Pearson.

The consortium includes Deutsche Telekom, Pathe Cinema, Hewlett Packard Europe and the High Tech Centre at the Babelsberg studios in Germany. Demonstrations of the technology are due to begin in June in Ireland, Italy, France, Germany and Belgium.

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## Final flicker for projectors as films are beamed in

Chris Barrie, Media  
Business Correspondent

**T**HAT most emotive of cinema symbols, the flickering projector, will soon be history if a project backed by the European Commission is successful. Next year a consortium plans to transmit films directly to hundreds of cinema screens in a move that could revolutionise the economics of film making.

According to Aerospa-

tele, the Cyber Cinema project is close to completing the development of a 35mm film, compress it in digital form, and transmit it encoded via satellite to dishes at cinemas. The cinema shows the film on high definition video projectors.

Aerospaiale expects the system to appeal to cinemas in small towns where audiences have traditionally waited up to four months to see the latest release. Sharon Reed, managing di-

rector of special effects firm Framstore, said the combination of digital editing and distribution would transform the economics of the film industry.

The system will free film makers from the high costs of making hundreds of prints and delivering them around the country — the "cans to vans" system.

UK film makers have argued that the Hollywood film studios dominate the British distribution system and fail to promote UK

films. However, the consortium has been unable to persuade a UK company to join it, though talks are said to be continuing with Pearson.

The consortium includes Deutsche Telekom, Pathe Cinema, Hewlett Packard Europe and the High Tech Centre at the Babelsberg studios in Germany. Demonstrations of the technology are due to begin in June in Ireland, Italy, France, Germany and Belgium.

Tennis  
Stephen Bierley  
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WOLVERHAMPTON  
ALL COURSES COMMENTARY  
ALL COURSES RESULTS  
TheGuardian











Cricket

New Equal Opportunities Commission recommendations would make the MCC rejection of women members a thing of the past

# Vote for women is too little, too late

John Duncan

THE MCC may not get another chance to vote on admitting women if Equal Opportunities Commission recommendations are taken up by the Government. A new EOC consultation document contains guidelines which would make last night's decision to ban women members illegal.

The MCC membership opted not to admit women. 6,969 voted to let them in, 5,538 were against — and the motion, supported by the MCC executive, fell because it failed by 1,369 votes to reach the necessary two-thirds majority.

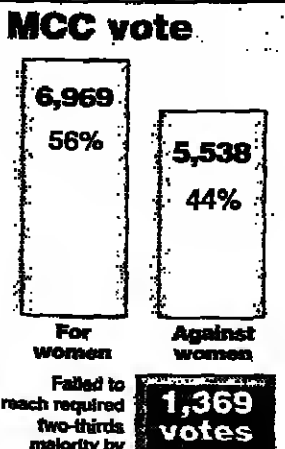
The MCC president Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie, who before the vote said he wanted to rid the club of its "fuddy-duddy image of old men puffing on pipes", said he was disappointed that a majority for change had not been achieved.

The committee will now meet today to consider its options in the light of the vote. Despite the strong backing of the committee for a Yes vote, Ingleby-Mackenzie said he expected members to "maintain their general support of the officials. I'm hoping we won't be shown the red card," he said after the result was announced at Lord's.

The MCC secretary Roger Knight said he expected some criticism following the decision. "People will be disappointed that the membership wasn't able to support sufficiently the recommendation of the committee," he said.

Rachael Heyhoe Flint, the former England women's cricket captain, pointed to the non-voters as the real culprits. "I want those 5,000 to look at themselves this morning and ask themselves what they have done to cricket."

The EOC wants to close the legal loophole which allows private sports clubs to discriminate against women. Although the recommendation would allow "genuine single-sex organisations" to stay that way, any private club that extended some rights or access to women but kept certain areas single-sex would be prevented from doing so.



against women in private sports clubs is likely to be strengthened by yesterday's decision. "As a private club the MCC is entitled to operate exclusively for men," said Ms Bahl. "However, the vote against women members is disappointing because it fails to recognise that both sexes derive enjoyment from watching and playing cricket."

Leader comment, page 8

Rugby Union

## Ireland appoint Kiwi hooker to replace Ashton

Robert Armstrong

IRELAND last night appointed Warren Gatland, a former All Blacks hooker who has been in charge of Connacht, as their new coach following the shock resignation of Brian Ashton.

Gatland will take over the team for their three remaining Five Nations fixtures, starting with the game in Paris on Saturday week. "I am delighted to have been offered this opportunity," said the 34-year-old, who played 17 times for New Zealand without ever winning a Test cap.

Niall Brophy, president of the Irish RFU, wished Gatland "the very best of luck". Ashton would doubtless argue that he will need it. Poor results, plus tensions with the team manager Pat Whelan, persuaded the former Bath coach to quit his £70,000-a-year post only 13 months into a six-year contract. He may shortly resume employment with another English club — possibly Leicester, Bristol or Sale.



Ashton... innovator

Ashton, accustomed to regular success during his seven years with Bath, found his Ireland role a major culture shock, with defeats the unpalatable norm and victories increasingly hard to come by in the new era. Differences of opinion with Whelan, an unpaid official with administrative control of the squad, left the Lancastrian feeling that he faced a struggle to make Ireland competitive at next year's World Cup.

"I have decided to resign with regret, for personal reasons," said the 34-year-old, who played 17 times for New Zealand without ever winning a Test cap. "The union regrets Brian Ashton's resignation. I would like to thank him for his contribution to Irish rugby."

Ireland's only Five Nations success during Ashton's tenure was last season's 26-25 victory over Wales in Cardiff which was not sufficient to prevent them finishing bottom of the championship table. In the autumn a promising win against Canada was followed by defeats by New Zealand and Italy, and earlier this month Ireland lost their opening Five Nations fixture 13-12 to Scotland at Lansdowne Road.

One of the first English union coaches to use rugby league drills, Ashton is an innovative thinker who attempted to take Ireland away from their traditional set-piece tactics which had left them adrift of the modern game. However while the RFU have made strenuous efforts to improve the standards of inter-provincial competition — three provinces participated in this season's European Cup — the amateur ethos remains pervasive among Ireland's clubs who are unable to afford full-time professional players. Ashton declared Ireland would go nowhere by playing what he called "dinosaur rugby" yet the domestic infrastructure continued to lag some way behind his progressive vision.



No way through... Saracens player-coach Francois Pienaar charges into a two-man Sale barrier

DAVID ROGERS

Premiership: Saracens 42, Sale 20

## Forward power puts Saracens back at the top

Robert Kitson

NOTHING much went to plan at Vicarage Road last night but normal service was resumed in the end.

Saracens went two points clear at the top of the Premiership table, although Newcastle have two games in hand, with their 12th win in 13 matches against a Sale side who never quite got to grips with the job in hand.

On an evening which saw the scoreboard blanked out by an electrical fault and the second-half delayed as the dancing girls went on with their routine while the players impatiently waited for a resumption, the final scoreline was more than Francois Pienaar and company had a right to expect.

But they won comfortably in the end, the perfect warm-up for Saturday's Cup quarter-final at Richmond.

Entering the last 10 minutes, the visitors trailed only 30-20 after their winger Tom Beirns' second try of the night, only for the home forwards to have the final decisive word. Ben Sturman, playing instead of England's Richard Hill, and the substitute Adrian Oliver stretched the final margin and five tries may ultimately make a difference if eyes turn to the points difference column at the end of the season.

Saracens started with a penalty from Michael Lynagh and a drop-goal by South African full-back Gavin Johnson and carved themselves out a 10-point cushion inside 25 minutes thanks to a neat try, created by Kyran Bracken and Lynagh down the blind-side and finished by the centre Steve Ravenscroft.

Their record against Sale, though, is scarcely even since Nigel Wray's arrival, perhaps because the northerners possess similarly high forwards and an astute southern hemisphere influence at fly-half.

When Simon Mannix plays, Sale are always a side to be reckoned with and the timing of his short pop pass for Beirns' first try was supreme.

A penalty from Lynagh nevertheless ensured a 16-10 halftime lead for Saracens. Pienaar's close-range try stretched it to 23-10, followed by a penalty try when the Sale front-row finally exhausted the patience of the referee Ashley Rowden.

The official also doled out four yellow cards in a game without much in the way of malice. Bracken and Sturman for Saracens, Steve Diamond and Duncan Ball for Sale, all suffered, although whether they saw the cards against the backdrop of empty yellow plastic seats must have been debatable. A crowd of 3,722 is low by the current Saracens standards; two or three times that many might have been in hand and blowing a television set in the original waterlogged day.

Sale's coach John Mitchell spent large chunks of the first-half shaking his head furiously at Rowden's decisions but at least knows he has a reliable try-scorer in Beirns. The winger's second score, a fine darting effort, was his 10th league try in 13 games this season. This was Saracens' night, though, even if Philippe Sella's 11-year-old daughter failed in her bid to win a television set in the half-time kicking competition.

"There are a lot of games to go," said Saracens' director of coaching Mark Evans. "Having gone through last season with games in hand and blowing it, I'd rather be in this position."

SCORES: Saracens 42: Oliver, penalty, Pienaar, Ravenscroft, Sturman, Beirns, Johnson, 2. Newcastle 10: Beirns, Johnson, 2. Sale 20: Johnson, 2. Leicester 13: Johnson, 2. Bristol 13: Johnson, 2. Gloucester 13: Johnson, 2. Exeter 13: Johnson, 2. Bath 13: Johnson, 2. Cardiff 13: Johnson, 2. London 13: Johnson, 2. Worcester 13: Johnson, 2. Northampton 13: Johnson, 2. Plymouth 13: Johnson, 2. Reading 13: Johnson, 2. Saracens 42: Oliver, penalty, Pienaar, Ravenscroft, Sturman, Beirns, Johnson, 2. Newcastle 10: Beirns, Johnson, 2. Sale 20: Johnson, 2. Leicester 13: Johnson, 2. Bristol 13: Johnson, 2. Gloucester 13: Johnson, 2. Exeter 13: Johnson, 2. Bath 13: Johnson, 2. Cardiff 13: Johnson, 2. London 13: Johnson, 2. Worcester 13: Johnson, 2. Northampton 13: Johnson, 2. Plymouth 13: Johnson, 2. Reading 13: Johnson, 2.

Rugby League

## Wigan warned on cash

Andy Wilson

WIGAN have been warned there will be no easy way out of the problems they are encountering in squeezing under the newly introduced salary cap.

The cap bars clubs from spending more than 50 per cent of their income on players' salaries and bonuses, and Wigan were told this week by the Rugby Football League that their spending plans for the season just started were unacceptable.

Wigan responded by asking their players to accept cuts in projected bonuses totalling up to £170,000. But the League said yesterday that it had yet to accept those revised plans.

"Only one club — Bradford — voted against the new cap when it was introduced last September so we are determined that it should be strictly enforced," said the RFU's spokesman Mike Rowe.

He imposed if any club does transgress will be discussed by the board next Wednesday. They include a transfer embargo, the withholding of News Corporation funds and also the deduction of points.

Wigan, who have the best-paid players in the game, are allowed to include in their income the recent £2 million injection from Dave Whelan's JJB Sports firm, but can spend only half of it on players.

It is thought their income projections were based on progress to the later stages of the Challenge Cup, but the regulations insist they should reckon only on reaching the last 16.

Wigan will surely progress one stage further on Sunday, when in the fifth round they travel to the First Division club Dewsbury with Smitb and Tony Mestrov returning from injuries sustained in pre-season games.

But Denis Betts, who has rejoined the club after two years with Auckland Warriors, has still not recovered from a major shoulder operation and is unlikely to be fit for another month.

Dewsbury are still hoping to include David O'Donnell, an experienced Australian hooker. They have appealed against the refusal to grant him a work permit.

London Broncos have been refused permission to play their latest Australian signing, Luke Goodwin, against Halifax at The Stoop on Sunday because they missed the Challenge Cup deadline, so Damien Chapman will start at stand-off.

In such conditions a good spinner is a must, and Ramnarine is one of two changes made from the 13 selected for the previous Test, won in dramatic fashion by England in Trinidad to level the series. Out from that party go Franklyn Rose, who did not play, and Kenny Benjamin, a horse for the course at Queen's Park Oval, who did.

Their places go to Ramnarine and the Barbadian batsman Roland Holder, who scored 183 for West Indies A against England in the Spanish Town warm-up to the aborted first Test.

That means that no new opener has been introduced and that, despite strong evidence of decline, Brian Lara's fellow Trinidadian Ian Bishop stays on as a fourth seamer despite the credentials of Rose and Mary Dillon.

Carl Hooper, the vice-captain, retains his place despite a dust-up with the West Indies board over his non-appearance as captain of Guyana in their match against England this week, although Holder's presence might yet indicate that all is not yet settled on that front.

Four spinners — Ramnarine, another leg-spinner, Rawl Lewis, who bowled so well during the Champions Trophy series in Sharjah, and two left-armers, Winston Reid of Barbados and Neil McGarrell of Guyana — will have been considered.

Ramnarine and McGarrell were the front runners on account of their performances against England. McGarrell spun the ball hugely at the Everest club on Monday and produced career-best figures of 7-71 in England's first innings. Ramnarine took 5-72 for

Trinidad and Tobago in the two-day scratch match at Guayana Park.

Despite Lara's reputation as a more enlightened strategist, it would go against the grain for West Indies to do anything more than include a specialist spinner as a token squad member.

Generally it has been accepted that if a pitch helps the spinners it will help the seamers too, only faster. However, Lara's total reliance on Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose on the final day in Trinidad, and the discarding of Rose, are a measure of the mistrust in the abilities of the up-and-coming pacemen.

There will come a day when the old battering-ram might have to concede to more subtle methods, but it is doubtful West Indies have genuinely reached that stage now. That said, the selectors might feel it is worth stirring things up to see what emerges.

England, for example, have not been shy in singling the praises of Ramnarine — but this, as anyone around the game will attest, is merely a clumsy way of saying that they would rather face him than some other of the opposition's bowlers.

Of course West Indies will know this, and the odds are still that Ramnarine will not be in the XI when the West Indies side is announced before the toss on Friday morning.

Cricket

## Windies go for Ramnarine

Mike Selvey in a parched Georgetown where spin enters the fourth-Test equation

THE sight of a front-line spinner in a West Indies attack is almost as rare as that of Phil Tufnell without a cigarette in his mouth. So in choosing the Trinidadian leg-spinner Dinanath Ramnarine in their squad of 13 for the fourth Test which begins at Bourda on Friday, the West Indies selectors have gone severely against their natural instincts.

El Nino, the global weather phenomenon which gets the blame for most things these days, is again the underlying reason for this change of approach. The drought in Guyana is now so severe that watercourses are dry and there is real fear that the Bourda pitch, which has received nothing but artificial watering, might crumble.

In such conditions a good spinner is a must, and Ramnarine is one of two changes made from the 13 selected for the previous Test, won in dramatic fashion by England in Trinidad to level the series. Out from that party go Franklyn Rose, who did not play, and Kenny Benjamin, a horse for the course at Queen's Park Oval, who did.

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## Lomu leaves South Africa out of pocket

Paul Weaver in Durban

JONAH LOMU is in town here, and right now that is giving South Africa's hard-pressed cricket officials more headaches than Pakistan's unpredictable players.

Lomu will be on the wing for the Auckland Blues against the local Coastal Sharks at King's Park on Saturday in the opening round of rugby's Super 12 competition, which might explain why ticket sales for the second Test between South Africa and Pakistan, starting down the road at Kingsmead tomorrow, are well down.

The rugby kicks off at 7pm, more than three hours after close of play at the Test, but the cricket organisers are worried that people will be unable to afford both. In fact what had seemed a very sellable series is already shaping up as a financial disaster.

The Gauteng Cricket Board lost some £300,000 on last week's first Test in Johannesburg — supposedly the series' big earner — because of a delayed start and the loss of 241 overs to rain and bed light. That led Ali Becker, managing director of the United Cricket Board, to follow Australian practice and declare a local blackout of television coverage of this Test.

The Natal board has budgeted on drawing 30,000 paying customers to this Test; so far it has sold 1,000 tickets.

"We were ready [for the Southern Ocean]. For us to be in Cape Horn and to the finish shows that we learnt from our mistakes on leg two, and that is very satisfying."

Sailing

## Victorious Cayard in tune with carnival

Bob Fisher in Sao Sebastiao

ASAMBA band and exotic dancers dressed in little more than feathers and sequins were at the dockside when a huge crowd to greet the winner of the fifth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race at 2am local time.

This Brazilian town is in carnival and was determined that Paul Cayard and the crew of EF Language should quickly be in the same spirit.

It was the most stirring reception in the race's history, matching the most dramatic statement of superiority the race has seen in its 25 years. When EF Language finished after a little more than 23 days at sea, including the rounding of Cape Horn, the boat lying second in the leg from Auckland, Roy Heider's *Burns*, was 514 miles back.

It was EF Language's third victory and puts her 96 points ahead on total scores if the current positions are retained, but Dee Smith's *Chester* Racing was eating into the 16 miles between her and Brumel Sunery, and if the American boat passes the Dutch one she will be second overall and drop Grant Dalton's *Merit* Cup to third.

"This time," Cayard said, "we were ready [for the Southern Ocean]. For us to be in Cape Horn and to the finish shows that we learnt from our mistakes on leg two, and that is very satisfying."

Golf

## 'Disgusted' Norman defends his walk-out

GREG NORMAN, who retired from the South African PGA championship nine days ago with nine holes still to go, was unrepentant yesterday and complained that he was "absolutely disgusted" with the media criticism that followed his action.

The Australian has already won the tournament winner's prize money of \$100,000.

Tony Johnstone knew what he thought of his remark that "if Norman was getting paid what people said [a reported \$200,000 in appearance money] you'd have thought that was worth an extra day."

The event spilled into a fifth day because of rain delays and Norman, lying in third place at the time, told the sponsors he could not stay

because he had an engagement in America on the Monday — a fund-raising function for former President George Bush's son Jeb, who is campaigning to be Governor of Florida.

A \$225 fine was imposed by South African PGA commissioner Arnold Mentz, who called Norman's walk-out "injurious to the tour".



BBC racing comes under attack, page 13

World Cup blow for Fowler, page 14

Ashton quits as Ireland coach, page 15

West Indies call for spin, page 15

## SportsGuardian

Aston Villa's manager resigns

## Little leaves large problem

**Peter White** on the sudden departure of Brian Little, a victim of pressure and latest casualty of chairman Doug Ellis's reign

**B**RIAN LITTLE last night resigned as the manager of Aston Villa, only one week before the Premiership club's UEFA Cup quarter-final tie against Atletico Madrid.

Little, 44, made the unexpected decision to quit the club, where he has been in charge for more than four years, after a brief meeting at Villa Park yesterday with the chairman Doug Ellis.

Demands by Ellis for an upturn in results — with 11 matches remaining, Villa lie 15th and are only six points

off the relegation zone — and growing doubts about Little's methods, expressed most recently by his former teammate Andy Gray who publicly criticised his signings as well as his handling of players, appear to be at the root of the manager's decision to go.

Hopes of building on the foundations of Villa's fifth-place finish in 1997 soon disappeared and Little's problems intensified when the striker Savo Milosevic spat in the vicinity of his own supporters during a game at Blackburn and was subsequently placed on the transfer list. When Little selected him for the game at Derby the club refused to play, but has since made his peace and has appeared in the club's last two matches.

In a statement Ellis said: "We are sad and disappointed to announce that Brian Little has resigned as the manager of Aston Villa. We are in the process of securing another team manager, but in the meantime assistant Allan Evans and the coaching staff will be in charge."

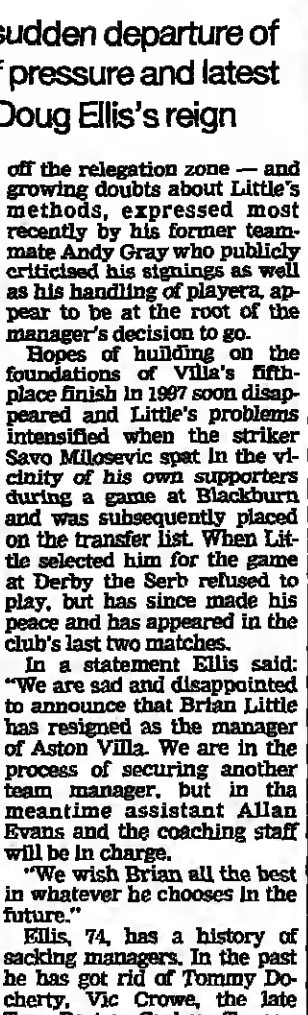
"We wish Brian all the best in whatever he chooses in the future."

Ellis, 74, has a history of sacking managers. In the past he has got rid of Tommy Docherty, Vic Crowe, the late Tony Barton, Graham Turner, Billy McNell, Dr Josef Venglos and Little's predecessor Ron Atkinson. The only other manager to resign during Ellis's reign was Graham Taylor, who quit the club in 1990 to become the England manager.

Little signed a new five-year contract, believed to be worth about £400,000 a year, in January 1997, but has walked out of Villa with no guarantee of a pay-off. Now Ellis must decide whether to reward him for the services he has given.

Little willingly faced 200 members of the club's shareholders' association less than 24 hours earlier and gave them frank answers to questions about policy and possible signings.

At the end of the meeting he was given a standing ovation. The association chairman Buck Chinn said afterwards: "I was very impressed with what Brian had to say, and I only wish the audience of supporters had been tenfold. The standing ovation was a massive vote of confidence in Brian, and that should not be



Strain game... Brian Little found favour with shareholders and in Europe. Elsewhere there was gloom. GRAHAM CHADWICK

misconstrued as the chairman-type backing before he sacks a manager."

Little arrived at Villa on November 25 1994, his 41st birthday, when the club were in grave danger of relegation. He saved them from dropping into the First Division and in the following two seasons guided them to a Coca-Cola Cup victory against Leeds United at Wembley and a place in Europe.

Little was shocked when Villa lost their first four

games of this season and pressure began to mount because of the lack of goals scored by Stan Collymore, his record £7 million signing from Liverpool. However, Villa reached the last eight of the UEFA Cup with victories over Bordeaux, Athletic Bilbao and Steaua Bucharest.

There was disbelief among the Villa players last night. The Portuguese full-back Fernando Nelson said: "I can't believe it, especially as there are only two months or so of

the season remaining. If it had happened earlier, or even at the end of the campaign, perhaps it would not have been so surprising, but this is a real bombshell."

Simon Grayson, signed by Little from Leicester City last summer for £1 million, said: "It has come like a bolt out of the blue. The season was still alive with the UEFA Cup. Maybe if we hadn't done well in that then we might have sensed something would happen, but certainly not before."

## The race to free football from poison



Paul Hayward

**R**ACISM off the pitch has always bedevilled football. Now there is trouble on it, too. West Ham's Eyal Berkovic says he was subjected to anti-semitic abuse by Blackburn players 11 days ago. David Mellor's Task Force has set sail, but can it clean out the slum of the xenophobic mind?

At a public forum in the House of Commons on Monday night Mellor aired a set of radical proposals aimed not at fascist fans but prejudiced players. A racist fan is no different to a racist player, but somehow the idea of the latter seems far worse.

Mellor suggested fines and long suspensions for players caught on television mouthing racial abuse, the deduction of points from the clubs of serial offenders, publishing a league table of culprits and encouraging clubs to employ more non-whites. If his concerns are well-founded, it suggests that the richer and more popular football gets, the lower sinks its soul.

As Martin Amis once wrote, racism isn't a system of thought, it's an absence of thought, a hole where the intellect should be. Strangely, racial joshing in football is often seen by the perpetrator as an extension of an otherwise laddish culture, a pushing of locker-room humour to its most dubious limits.

The victim is supposed to know that it's not meant seriously. I have seen players being racially teased by their teammates and, though it turns the outsider's stomach, responding only with a tolerant smile.

Weird. But then racism defies rational thought. The number of avowedly racist footballers could probably be assembled in one minibus. But then football is about conflict, about tribal animosity, and from the mouths of normally sane men seep thoughts that shame and probably shock even them.

Berkovic's claim is only an allegation, as was Ian Wright's notorious suggestion that Peter Schmeichel had racially abused him. Yet there are enough examples for us to believe that there is a degree of institutionalised ignorance in football.

The Football Association and PFA (the players' union) are running an expensive and high-profile campaign against racism on the terraces. They need to. At a Third Division match last season I saw half a dozen bananas land at a black player's feet. Imagine making that Saturday morning trip to the greengrocer's.

In stadiums there are still large pockets of racist chanting, not just in Britain, but Holland, Germany and Italy too. In the Old Firm match in Glasgow, Catholics and Protestants abuse each other unspeakably. Liverpool and Manchester United supporters loathe one another. All this suggests that the kind of racism football engenders springs from the confrontational and tribal nature of the game rather than black-white or Jewish-Christian antipathies.

In football it is never enough to be pro one's own team. One has to be anti everybody else's.

The Berkovic affair is serious and is unlikely to go away in a hurry. Any suggestion of anti-semitic behaviour invokes the darkest memories of our fading century. If racism can be graded, in one of Mellor's league tables, anti-semitism sets off the deepest revulsion because it speaks of the worst of all human crimes. If Berkovic is telling the truth, Blackburn have a real problem. If not, he's playing with fire and has insulted them unforgettably.

Confronted yesterday with Berkovic's allegations, the Blackburn manager Roy Hodgson said: "That's ridiculous and I'm not interested in that. Harry Redknapp [the West Ham manager] was very close to me and I didn't hear anything, but if he heard it, he heard it. I'm not suggesting that he didn't, but I didn't hear anything and furthermore I just think that these things are a storm in a teacup. For me the real controversy in the game surrounds the sending off of Kevin Gallacher and not what people are alleged to have said."

IN OTHER words, Hodgson doesn't really know and probably never will. But Redknapp seems to believe his man: "I had a black player been the subject of similar racist remarks the chances are there would have been a major row."

There is one anyway, and the Task Force claims to be on its way. Let it start by changing the Football Offenders' Act so individuals and not just groups can be charged for shouting abuse. It takes one man, one player, to poison a good day out.

## Banks on the march as MCC votes to keep women out

John Duncan

**T**ONY BANKS, the sports minister, yesterday declared he would march on the Lord's pavilion with women who want to challenge the MCC's refusal to open its doors to all.

The club's men-only rule was confirmed last night when a motion to admit women to membership received 6,998 votes for and 5,536 against, failing to secure

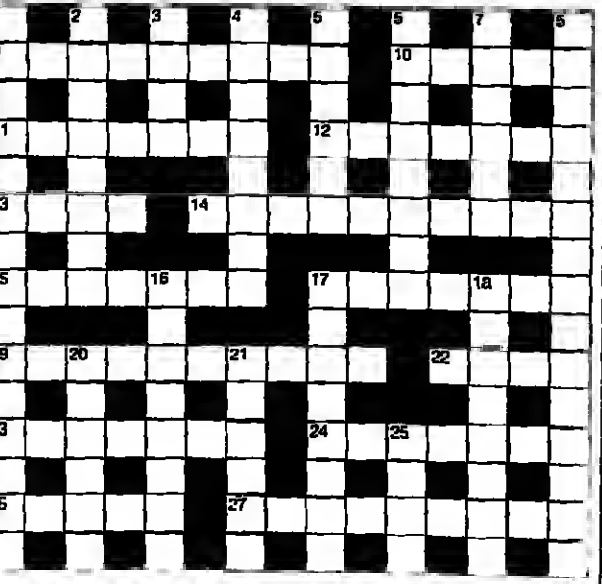
a two-thirds majority needed. Interviewed by Radio 5 Live's Sybil Ruscoe, Banks said he hoped a woman would challenge the decision under equal opportunities legislation. "Would you march with women on the pavilion?" asked Ruscoe. "I most certainly would," said Banks.

The Government, he said, ensure the MCC received no money from the Lottery while the ban remained.

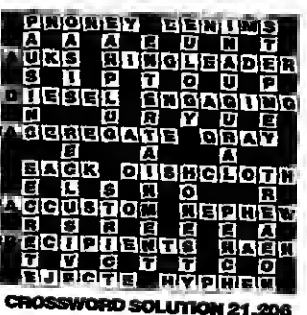
Full story, page 15

## Guardian Crossword No 21,207

Set by Araucaria



- Across**
- 26 5's day off with model recently (4,5)
  - 10 Khan at home, khan at home... (5)
  - 11,20,4,27 Abstain, well born person, from pursuing the subject, and farewell (26,5) (2,3,2,6,4,4,4,5)
  - 12 West to sort out class performer (7)
  - 13 Messenger about apple (4)
  - 14 Card game (duple form) ordered by referee? (8,2)
  - 16 Rowland was sarcastic? A very little (4,3)
  - 17 Lots of money without benefit, without love, makes a fast heart (3-4)
  - 19 Baby-minder gives one a leg up with GCSE (3-7)
  - 22 Attempt crazy return (4)
- Down**
- 1 See 3
  - 2 A newspaper icon confused the capital (8)
  - 3,1 Time off, in the style of parishioner's publicity, begins Keats's poem's story (1,3,1,4,2,3,5)
  - 4 See 11
  - 5 See 26
  - 6 Beginning of title of Keats's poem entitled... (8)
  - 7 Supporter on his own is a fidget (6)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,206

- 8 Revenue docked by tail tip off, not a fitting quality (15)
- 16 Giving away secrets, like the brook left earlier on (8)
- 17 Power circles in 20, under which 26 5 wrote (4,4)
- 18 Make an enemy of Sergeant Turner (8)
- 20 See 11
- 21 Hammer plant that's withered round lake in Keats's poem (6)
- 25 Go with the band (4)

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I doubt the mouse could live on cardboard because rodents only eat hard things. Otherwise their teeth grow and grow until they cut into their own head. Suddenly blood will pour out and the mouse will die in a pool of its own redness. Notes & Queries

G2 p7

20/02/1998